

THEOLOGY IN THE HIV&AIDS ERA SERIES



MODULE 4

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE
HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS

BY
SERIES EDITOR
MUSA W. DUBE



THE HIV&AIDS CURRICULUM FOR TEE
PROGRAMMES AND INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA

© 2007 World Council of Churches

All rights reserved. No part of this handbook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Published by World Council of Churches,
Ecumenical HIV & AIDS Initiative in Africa
150 route de Ferney
P.O. Box 2100
1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 791 6321 Fax: +41 22 791 6122

E-mail: ttz@wcc-coe.org

Website: <http://www.wcc-coe.org>

COURSE DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Writer:

M. W. Dube

Technical Advisor:

G. S. Ntloedibe-Kuswani

Series Editor:

M. W. Dube

A NOTE TO LEARNERS, USERS AND READERS

The overall goal of this module is to contribute towards building HIV&AIDS competent churches and theological institutions. This module is part of a series of ten modules entitled, *Theology in the HIV&AIDS Era* which were developed for distance learners. The modules accompany the HIV&AIDS Curriculum for TEE Programmes and Institutions in Africa.

The process of production began with an all Africa training of trainers' workshop on mainstreaming HIV&AIDS in Theological Education by Extension (TEE), held in Limuru Kenya, July 1-7, 2004. The workshop called for the production of a distance learning curriculum and accompanying ten modules to enable the mainstreaming of HIV&AIDS in TEE programs.

Writers were thus identified, trained in writing for distance learners and given their writing assignments. In July 2-13, 2005, twelve writers gathered at the Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Botswana with their first drafts for a peer review and a quality control workshop. The result of the process is this series on *Theology in the HIV&AIDS Era* and the accompanying curriculum for TEE. The whole process was kindly sponsored by the Ecumenical Initiative for HIV&AIDS in Africa (EHAIA).

Although the target audience for these modules is the distance learning community, it is hoped that the series will also stimulate new programmes, such as diplomas, degrees, masters and doctoral studies in HIV&AIDS theological research and thinking in residential theological institutions. It is also hoped that the series will contribute towards breaking the silence and the stigma by stimulating HIV&AIDS theological reflections and discussions in various circumstances, such as in Sunday schools, women's meetings, youth and men's fellowships, workshops, conferences and among teachers and preachers of religious faith.

Musa W. Dube
Gaborone, Botswana
July 28, 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	MODULE 4	7
PART I:	INTRODUCING THE HIV&AIDS STORY AND NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS	11
Unit 1:	INTRODUCTION: HIV&AIDS, NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND METHODS OF READING	13
	The HIV&AIDS Epidemic	
	The New Testament Literary Families	
	Some Methods of Reading the New Testament	
Part II:	READING THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS	27
Unit 2:	THE GOSPEL OF MARK AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	28
	Introduction: A Brief History of Mark and Themes in Mark	
	HIV&AIDS Stigma: “If You Choose... I do Choose	
	<i>Talitha Cum!</i> HIV&AIDS, Gender,	
	Youth Hope and Healing	
	Jesus Blesses Little Children in the HIV&AIDS Era	
Unit 3:	THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	42
	Introduction: A Brief History of the Gospel of	
	Luke and Themes in Luke	
	The Role of Social Injustice in the Spread of HIV&AIDS	
	“The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me”	
	Attitudes towards Sin and Sinners	
	“She has not Stopped Kissing [me]”	
	“Zacchaeus...,I Must Stay at Your House Today”	

Part III:	READING THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXT	61
Unit 4:	ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	61
	Introduction: A Brief History of Acts and Themes in Acts	
	The Early Church Living the Message of Liberation	
	“I will Pour My Spirit Upon All Fresh!”	
	“They had All things in Common”	
	“Serving Widows”	
Part IV:	READING PAULINE LETTERS IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS	76
Unit 5:	READING GALATIANS AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	77
	Introduction: Brief History of Galatians and Themes	
	Themes of the Epistle of Galatians: What?	
Unit 6:	READING 1 CORINTHIANS AND THE HIV& AIDS STORY	93
	Introduction: Brief History of Corinthians and Themes in Corinthians	
	1 Corinthians 7: Sexuality and Freedom	
Part V:	READING CATHOLIC AND PASTORAL LETTERS IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS	109
Unit 7:	READING 1 TIMOTHY AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	110
	Introduction: Brief History of 1 Timothy and Themes in 1 Timothy	
	Managing the Church as a Household	
	Reading 1 Timothy with the HIV&AIDS Story	
	Re-reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS Prevention and Care	

Unit 8:	READING JAMES AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	130
	Introduction: Brief History of James and Themes in James	
	“Faith without Works is Dead”	
	“Come Now, You Rich People, Weep and Wail!”	
Part VI:	READING THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE IN THE	141
	HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS	
Unit 9:	THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	142
	Introduction: Brief history of John and Themes in John	
	Fighting the HIV&AIDS Stigma and Discrimination	
	Promoting Caregiving: “You ought to wash one another’s feet”	
Unit 10:	READING REVELATION AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY	156
	Introduction: Brief History of Revelation and Themes of Revelation	
	“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!”	
	The Context of Babylon Today and the Struggle against HIV&AIDS	
	Heaven has a Language for this Trade	
	“Then I saw a New Heaven and a New Earth”	
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	172

MODULE 4

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS

MODULE OVERVIEW

Module 4 focuses on reading the New Testament (NT) in the light of the HIV&AIDS epidemic. The New Testament, also known as the Christian Testament, consists of twenty seven books. The books tell us about the story of Jesus—his origin, deeds and teaching, as well as the story of the early church, its rise and growth. The New Testament books were written largely in the first century, by a variety of early church authors, at different times, places and in different circumstances. In short, the books addressed different situations and questions facing the early church. In the fourth century, the books that previously existed separately were combined into our current Bible, which consists of sixty-six books. The Bible was regarded as the canon, that is, the measure of Christian faith. In the almost two thousand years since it was written, the New Testament has remained central to the Christian faith, and to its believers. It is an authoritative spiritual book of guidance for Christian believers in all circumstances.

The HIV&AIDS epidemic on the other hand, has only had a life span of twenty-four years. In the course of a few short years, the HIV&AIDS epidemic has caused tremendous suffering. There are a number of factors that have been identified as contributing to the suffering. These include: the lack of a cure, the associated stigma, stress on care-givers, high medical costs, growing numbers of orphans, poverty, and broken-hearted individuals, families, communities and countries. The suffering has lead many people to intense spiritual questioning. People Living with HIV&AIDS (henceforth, PLWHA) and the affected communities seek spiritual answers in the light of this major suffering and attack on life. Believers and non-believers alike ask questions about God’s will, presence, power and love. They ask questions about the meaning of life as they face suffering and hopelessness.

Since the New Testament is an authoritative book for Christian faith, it is important to read the New Testament story in the light of the HIV&AIDS story. This module shall therefore seek to read the New Testament in the context of HIV&AIDS, seeking to address the critical questions of our time. It will read the New Testament in search of answers concerning HIV&AIDS prevention, stigma, discrimination, social justice, access to affordable drugs, care-giving for PLWHA and care-giving for the affected groups such as caregivers, widows and orphans. It will seek to read the New Testament in the context of a major attack on life—suffering, hopelessness and death. The reading will explore how you, my dear learner, and the Christian church can revalue life, inspire compassion, hope and healing, where currently hopelessness, death and suffering reign.

Module 4 is divided into six parts and ten units. The first part of module 4 introduces the HIV&AIDS and the New Testament story. The second part of module 4 explores the synoptic gospels—Mark and Luke—in light of the HIV&AIDS epidemic. The third part of module 4 reads the Acts of the Apostles with in the context of the HIV&AIDS story. Part four looks at Paul’s letters, Galatians and 1 Corinthians, in the light of HIV&AIDS. Part five focuses on reading pastoral and Catholic letters, 1 Timothy and James, within the HIV&AIDS context. The last part focuses on reading the Johannine literature and the gospel of John and Revelation, within the light of HIV&AIDS. Since each book and the epidemic itself are huge stories, each unit only uses one or two passages from a concerned book to address one or two critical issues of the HIV&AIDS story.

Methodologically, I will employ the metaphors of a story and journey as we search for new stories and journeys as a way of understanding life. The term ‘story’ will refer to the New Testament and HIV&AIDS story. Elsewhere, I have pointed out that in storytelling when “we listen to each other’s stories, we create a space for breaking silences, of understanding, of empathy, of being prophetic to one another and, hopefully, of giving justice a better deal”. I continue to point out that, “Within HIV&AIDS contexts...[storytelling] provides a space for breaking the stigma and discrimination, as well as embarking on better informed prevention and care strategies” (Dube 2003:109). Similarly, Denise Ackermann points out that in the HIV&AIDS era, a story:

Has the power to break the silences surrounding this crisis and to give it a human face. Story telling becomes a two-way conversation—hearing stories of suffering and triumph, and retelling *the* story of suffering and triumph in our communities of faith. The intersecting of our life stories with the Jesus story is our ultimate hope (2004:41-42).

I will be inviting you then, my dear learner, to enter, walk and live in these two stories (HIV&AIDS and the New Testament) to bring them to highlight each other. The process of bringing the two stories together is a moment of weaving other new stories—stories of living a healing and healed; a hopeful and compassionate; a justice-seeking and justice-loving life in the HIV&AIDS era.

The second metaphor is that of a journey. In Setswana we say, “*Go tsamaya ke go bona,*” that is, “to take a journey is to have your eyes opened to new things”. Undertaking a journey, therefore, is a process of being opened to new worlds and being invited to review your own world in the light of what the journey reveals to you. A journey can be physical, spiritual and mental, but it should reveal new worlds to us and challenge us to think critically about our own worlds and the new worlds revealed to us. What is even more challenging is to take a journey within your own world—thereby challenging yourself to see your own home country and culture with new and critical eyes. I will be inviting you, my dear learner, to take a journey to the New Testament and HIV&AIDS story worlds. In the process of this travelling, I hope you will participate in this journey as we seek to weave a new story of a healed, de-stigmatised, hopeful, justice-seeking and compassionate world.

ACTIVITY 1

1. List some sayings and proverbs about journeying and travelling from your culture.
2. Give the meaning of each of the proverb and saying.
3. Which of the proverbs can assist you in understanding a healing and healed world?

MODULE INSTRUCTIONS

For our journey, please be sure that you have:

1. A complete copy of the New Testament in the language of your choice
2. A hard cover notebook for your notes, activities and self-assessment tests
3. Attempted all the activities and self-assessment tests in all the units

AIM OF THE MODULE

- To read the New Testament for the HIV&AIDS struggle.

MODULE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this module, you should be able to read the New Testament to:

- ⌘ **Promote** HIV&AIDS prevention by revaluing the sacredness of life
- ⌘ **Fight** HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination through compassion
- ⌘ **Encourage** quality care for PLWHA and the affected
- ⌘ **Highlight** specific needs of particular groups such as PLWHA, children, orphans, widows and care-givers
- ⌘ **Inspire** hope for life and the future in communities devastated by AIDS
- ⌘ **Fight** social injustice and social inequalities that promote HIV&AIDS
- ⌘ **Participate** in building compassionate, healing and justice loving churches
- ⌘ **Become** an agent of healing, compassion, hope and justice.

PART 1

INTRODUCTION: HIV&AIDS, NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND METHODS OF READING

OVERVIEW

In module 3, you learned how to read the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) in the light of HIV&AIDS. Now you are taking your journey further to learn how to study the New Testament story in the light of the HIV&AIDS story. In unit I, we will focus on getting a broad understanding of the HIV&AIDS epidemic and New Testament story. We will begin by journeying into the story of HIV&AIDS to discover how it spreads, the magnitude of the epidemic, how it is linked with social injustice, how stigma affects people, and its impact on caregivers. I also believe that the impact of HIV&AIDS is on ‘everything’ and ‘everyone’, given that it is a global crisis.

In the second part of unit 1, we will journey together into the story world of the New Testament. I shall introduce you to the different genres (types of literature) of the New Testament. These different genres of the New Testament are the gospels, history, letters and apocalypse. I hope this exploration will help you and the members of the Christian world to have an understanding of these books as historical books, which nonetheless should give us social and spiritual wisdom in the HIV&AIDS era.

New Testament books have been read and studied for over two thousands years. Many methods have been developed to study the New Testament. In this unit, I will have the pleasure of introducing some of the methods to you; namely, historical, narrative, feminist, liberation and inculturation. These methods will help you to enter the story world of the New Testament and HIV&AIDS with better and sharper eyes for seeing. They should help you to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice, healing and life.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ✂ Describe the story of the discovery, spread and impact of HIV&AIDS
- ✂ Narrate the story of the New Testament books
- ✂ Describe some methods of studying the New Testament
- ✂ Explain why we have to study the New Testament in the light of HIV&AIDS

TOPICS

Part I: Introducing the HIV&AIDS Story and New Testament Texts

Unit 1: Introduction: HIV&AIDS, New Testament Literature and Methods of Reading

The HIV&AIDS Story/Epidemic

The Discovery, the Spread and Magnitude

The Link With Social Injustice

The Stigma and Discrimination

Care-Giving

Spiritual Questions

The New Testament Literary Families

✂ The Synoptic Gospels

✂ History: Acts of the Apostles

✂ Epistles/Letters

✂ Apocalyptic Literature

Some Methods of Reading the New Testament

✂ Historical Approach

✂ Narrative Approach

✂ Feminist Approach

✂ Liberation Approach

✂ Inculturation Approach

Summary, Self-Assessment Test, Further Reading

UNIT 1

HIV&AIDS, NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND METHODS OF READING

THE HIV&AIDS STORY/EPIDEMIC

The Discovery, the Spread and the Magnitude

I believe that you are familiar with the HIV&AIDS story. There are many types of stories, good, bad, beautiful, captivating, amazing, exciting and horrible stories. HIV&AIDS belongs to the category of horror stories. It infects people in the millions. It is incurable. It causes long, dehumanising and impoverishing suffering. It leads to the death of millions and causes major suffering to the affected. It plants fear in the hearts of PLWHA and the affected. It moves with another epidemic cloud; namely, HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination. It leaves millions of children orphaned. In 2003, 40 million people around the world were living with HIV. In 2003, 5 million were newly infected with HIV, which amounts to 13 700 per day and 3 million died of AIDS—8500 per day. I am sure you will agree with me that this is a horror story happening to us on a daily basis. Be that as it may, a horror story makes us respond. It makes us want to stop the horror, or simply to see another reality. Sometimes this means that we scream in fear, sometimes we close our eyes, other times we look another direction, sometimes we run away and pretend it is not happening, mostly because we do not want to be involved, or we simply do not want to experience the horror. Sometimes we jump into action to stop the horror. At other times, we are frozen with shock. In short, we do not like a horror story. Whatever way we respond, our response is a search for another reality. The horror story, in other words, makes us yearn for another story world—a good story in our lives. A horror story confirms that, in fact, we prefer to experience our lives as good stories of living.

ACTIVITY 1

The HIV&AIDS horror story is one that the world has to live with on a daily basis. We are not watching or hearing about the story: *we are living in the reality of the HIV&AIDS horror story*. This makes it imperative for all of us to journey towards weaving another story of compassion, hope and justice. We must work to heal the world and ourselves. Ironically, in that sense, the HIV&AIDS horror story becomes a revelatory text, pointing us towards new worlds and justice-loving relationships.

1. *Have you ever watched a horror movie or seen a horrible accident happen?*
2. *If so, explain how you responded?*

Dr Kurian Manoj has illustrated our response to the HIV&AIDS horror story using the metaphor of a 'house on fire' in the village. The response of villagers is varied. Some jump to action putting out the fire with various means. Some stop and watch. Others put their hands on their heads and scream for help. Others close their eyes. Some just stand and watch, while others carry on with their normal duties as if nothing is happening.

1. *Which of the above describes your initial response?*
2. *Which of the above describes your current response?*
3. *Describe the response of your church.*
4. *Identify the most ideal response to HIV&AIDS from the house on fire story.*

You probably know that the first medical discovery of HIV&AIDS was in 1981, twenty-four years ago. It was medically discovered in the USA among the gay communities, that is, among men who sleep with men (MSM). Ever since then the spread of HIV&AIDS has shifted to heterosexual groups and to all other continents. Now, HIV&AIDS affects more heterosexual people than gay communities. Consequently, the most commonly promoted strategies of prevention are what is called ABC, that is, Abstain from Sex, Be faithful to your partner and Condomise (practice safer sex).

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Do you remember the first time you heard about HIV&AIDS?*
2. *Describe how the story was told to you.*
3. *Explain how the story has changed ever since.*
4. *In two paragraphs, write down your answers to these questions.*

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. It is a virus that is communicated through body fluids such as blood, semen and breast milk. You can only get infected if you come into contact with an infected person through unprotected sex (semen or vaginal fluids), breast milk (for children with infected mothers), using unsterilised needles in exchange (for injecting drug users), and contact with the blood of an infected person (in accidents, care-giving, during birth or rape). Many times there are some unfounded misconceptions and myths about how one can get infected by HIV. For example, some people think you can contact HIV through eating, sharing a bathroom, hugging or shaking hands with an infected person. This is not true.

ACTIVITY 3

1. *Describe some of the myths about the spread of HIV&AIDS in your country.*
2. *Explain why these myths are dangerous to HIV&AIDS prevention.*

HIV destroys one's immunity until the body cannot defend itself from any other infection. Such a person is constantly sick, from various illnesses, because one's body is defenceless from any minor or major infection. It is at this stage that one is described as having AIDS. That is, a person is described as having AIDS, when HIV has destroyed their immune system completely, leaving them open to what are called 'opportunistic infections'. The extent of the destruction can be measured medically through counting one's CD4s in a blood sample. CD4s are the helper cells in the white blood cells. When one's CD4s are very low, after the HIV has depleted them, then one begins to get ill constantly, with many different types of illnesses. Such a person has AIDS. It may take 5-15 years before an HIV+ person moves to the AIDS stage, depending on their diet and other factors.

Caregiving

AIDS is incurable because one's body has lost capacity to defend itself. It is incurable because there is, so far, no medicine that kills or stops the HI virus from multiplying and depleting one's immunity. The solution that has been adopted by the medical community in the so-called 'developing' countries is to send AIDS patients home for care-giving by relatives until such a time that the person dies. Some people have money to buy expensive HIV&AIDS drugs—antiretrovirals (henceforth, ARVs) to reduce the impact of HIV. Many cannot afford these drugs, so they try to eat well, exercise and adopt a positive view towards life. Caregiving for AIDS patients can be a twenty-four hour job that drains the caregiver and the whole family. It often stops the caregiver from going to work and leaves them physically, financially and emotionally exhausted. This means care-giving families get emotionally stressed, become poorer and may be unable to feed themselves adequately.

Caregiving in the HIV&AIDS context, therefore, goes beyond PLWHA. Care must include children who become orphaned; wives who become widowed; parents, families and friends who are grieved, angry and broken hearted as they lose close relatives and friends. It includes exhausted caregivers and HIV&AIDS activists, who need to recuperate from their burn-out. HIV&AIDS caregiving is a huge task that affects the economic production of the family and the country. This is because both the sick and the caregivers begin to frequently miss work and finally stop going to work, while their medical and diet expenses go up. At this level, you can see that HIV&AIDS affects everything and everyone.

Link with Social Injustice

You have probably heard that HIV&AIDS can and does happen to anyone. This is true. Rich and poor, young and old, black and white, men and women, abled and disabled, homosexual and heterosexual—all of us can be infected by HIV and suffer from AIDS. Nevertheless, HIV&AIDS tends to link itself to poverty and social inequalities such as gender, sexual, ethnic, race and age-related discriminations. Consequently, the most discriminated, marginalised and powerless members of our world such as the poor, women, children, youth, blacks, men who sleep with men, sex workers, the disabled, injecting drug users, survivors of war and survivors of sexual

abuse are the most likely to become infected. Once the powerless are infected, they are likely to die faster due to lack of quality care (good eating and access to affordable drugs). Due to its link to social injustice, 90 per cent of the infected are in the so called 'developing' countries. The HIV&AIDS link with social injustice also makes it *a complex story*. That is, we cannot, and we should not, easily allow ourselves to think that those who have HIV&AIDS are morally deficient. Mostly, PLHWA are socially disempowered groups, who became exposed due to their powerlessness. Due to its complexity, the usual ABC (Abstain, Be faithful and Condomise) strategy is very useful, but highly inadequate. Consequently, it has been reformulated several times (Dube 2001; Aprovech 1999) to articulate the complexity of HIV&AIDS and to incorporate the much needed social-justice informed approach. Here is a good example of a reformulated ABC from Ann Smith and Ed Macdonagh:

- **A**dvocate for changes in legislation, culture, attitudes or practices that promote imbalances of power
- **B**reak the silence that colludes with situations of denial, stigmatisation, isolation or discrimination
- **C**hallenge instances of discrimination and injustice occurring in communities (Quoted in Bishop Lawrence Thienchat 2005:42).

HIV&AIDS Stigma and Discrimination

I believe you have heard about HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination. Stigma refers to the isolation and rejection of PLWHA and their families. Stigma is fuelled by many factors. Sometimes it is spurred by fears of infection; misunderstanding about how infection occurs; the misleading association of HIV with immorality; and the fear of death, which is associated with the PLWHA. Discrimination is when stigma is put into application, for example, when PLWHA and their affected are thrown out of their families, work, denied medical attention and insurance cover and, in some extreme instances, stoned to death. Even more seriously, stigma and discrimination frustrate efforts to prevent the spread of HIV&AIDS and the offer of quality care to PLWHA and the affected. Given the magnitude of the epidemic and the fact that we are all affected, what we need most is compassion towards one another.

ACTIVITY 4

1. *Describe some forms of stigmatisation and discrimination experienced by PLWHA in your country.*
2. *Write down some of the stories that you have heard or read from newspapers about HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination.*

Spiritual Questions

The fact that HIV&AIDS is an incurable disease that attacks the most powerless members of our societies makes it a huge ethical and spiritual issue. People begin to ask, where is God and what is God's will for the suffering? Does God care that the most powerless and discriminated members of the society are carrying a further burden of HIV&AIDS? Why does God allow HIV&AIDS to happen to our most vulnerable members of the world? In other words, HIV&AIDS raises spiritual questions, which is why this module seeks to accompany you, as a member of the Christian world, to take the journey of reading the New Testament in the light of HIV&AIDS. The New Testament is a scripture to millions of Christians, who read it for spiritual guidance and edification. Therefore, come with me to another exciting journey—a journey to another story world; namely, the story of New Testament Literature.

II. Introducing the New Testament Story

If the HIV&AIDS story is a horror story, the New Testament is largely held to be a story of the good news of Jesus Christ and his followers, the early church. Christian believers read and re-read the New Testament to seek God's will for their world. Believers go to church every Sunday of their lives to hear the New Testament story. They seek God's will in their lives by trying to understand what Jesus taught and did. Similarly, in this module we seek to read the New Testament in the light of HIV&AIDS, in order to rewrite the horrible story of death and hopelessness into a new story of compassion, hope, justice, healing and life.

But what does it mean to say the New Testament is 'a good news story'? Do you think this means there are no horror stories of illness, stigmatisation, poverty, international exploitation, discrimination on the basis of gender, age, class, ethnicity,

race, ability, sexuality, work or religion in the New Testament? Do you think there was no death and hopelessness in the New Testament times? In fact there are plenty of horror stories in the New Testament. What makes the New Testament ‘a good news story’ is that Jesus was committed to turning the horror stories of his people to the good news of liberation, compassion, healing, hope and justice. On these grounds, we will journey into the New Testament story world to; first, identify the horror stories of ancient times; second, to carefully assess how Jesus or the early church addressed the horror stories of their time. And, lastly, we shall struggle with how we can use the approach of Jesus and early church to address the horror story of the HIV&AIDS epidemic. This will be the major task of this module.

But, before we start, let us briefly assess the history and literary families of New Testament books. The New Testament has twenty-seven books, which were written between 47 and 125 CE. It has four literature families: gospels, history, epistles and apocalypse. This module will sample from each family. Let us now start to look at each of these literary families individually.

The Gospels

There are four gospels: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Gospel means *good news*. The gospels are documentation of the teaching and deeds of Jesus. The first gospel to be written was Mark (around 65 CE) and the latest was John (90-110 CE). Mark, Matthew and Luke are sometimes called synoptic gospels, because they are very similar in content and plot. That is, they present Jesus as preaching about the kingdom of God within a period of one year; from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he is crucified. John’s gospel belongs to the Johannine literature and it is slightly different as it presents Jesus as the “revealer of God” who was there from the beginning. John’s gospel also recounts that Jesus’ earthly ministry lasted for three years before he was crucified. Unlike the synoptic gospels, John has no parables (only allegories). It also has selected “signs” rather than miracles, which serve to reveal the identity of Jesus.

History

Acts of the Apostles is the only book that tells us how the early church developed and expanded after the death and ascension of Jesus. It begins with the believers receiving the Holy Spirit, and then preaching from Jerusalem, Samaria and to the ends of the

earth. In actual fact, Acts mainly focuses on two characters: Peter and Paul, with a major focus on the latter. Acts is a theological history, and like every other history it is selective. For example, while Jesus had twelve disciples, Acts tells us more about Peter than Paul (who was not a disciple of Christ), but hardly anything about the rest of the disciples of Christ.

Epistles

An epistle is a letter. The bulk of New Testament books are ancient letters, a total of twenty-one. Thirteen of the letters bear Paul's name. These were letters that Paul wrote to different churches in different places such Galatians, Philippians, Romans, and Corinthians, etc. He wrote to advise them on the various questions they had in their Christian faith. You have probably received a letter. How do you know that something is letter as opposed to a newspaper or a book? You are right—a letter has a certain format, a distinct beginning such as 'Dear Learner' and a certain ending such as, 'Yours Truly'. Similarly, the bulk of the New Testament epistles have the ancient format of a letter. This was characterised by stating the writer, then the recipient, followed by greetings and then thanksgiving.

ACTIVITY 5

Read Ephesians 1:1-2.

Identify the writer, recipient and greetings in this ancient letter.

1. “**Paul**, an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the Will of God.”

To the Saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace to you and peace from God Father/Mother and Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. *Read also: Romans 1:1-6; 1 Corinthians. 1-4; Philippians 1:1-2; 1 Timothy 1:1-2 and Titus 1:1-4, and identify the writer, recipient and greetings of an ancient letter.*

Apocalypse

The last family of literature of the New Testament is the apocalypse. Apocalypse means 'uncovering' or making unknown things known. As you may have guessed, the only book in the New Testament that falls in this group of literature is Revelation. Apocalypse is a political literature of resistance that uses secretive language to discuss

a dangerous and powerful enemy. It uses many symbols, metaphors, violent images and visions to reveal the future. Revelation was written within the Johannine community that had experienced oppression from the Roman Empire. The author underlines that the Roman Empire is an evil, many-headed beast, which shall be destroyed. The author closes the book by presenting a new heaven and a new earth.

III. Methods of Studying the New Testament and HIV&AIDS story

As a two thousand old authoritative book, that is, a scripture to millions of believers, many methods have been developed to study or read the New Testament. These methods should help you to understand the New Testament better. In this unit, I will introduce you to five methods for studying the New Testament: historical, narrative, liberation, feminist and inculturation.

The historical method acknowledges that the New Testament is an ancient text that must also be read as history. New Testament books were written in ancient Jewish culture, with an ancient language and within the Roman Empire. We shall use this method by beginning each unit with a brief history of the concerned book of the New Testament.

The narrative method underlines that a number of biblical books are written from a story perspective. A story has characters, plot, setting, narrators who tell the story to the reader or listener. I am sure you have read or listened to stories from your grandmother, friends, radio, TV, magazine or newspaper. A story invites you, as a reader/listener, to enter its world of characters and events, and to make a choice: to identify with those characters that embody good qualities and to distance yourself from characters that embody undesirable virtues. A story, in other words, is not neutral. In the New Testament, the gospels are written from a story perspective. In this module, we shall be extensively applying a narrative approach. As I said earlier, we shall regard both HIV&AIDS and the New Testament as stories, which we shall read together to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice and healing.

ACTIVITY 6

1. *Recall and write one of your favourite childhood stories.*
2. *State why this story is captivating to you.*
3. *Write down your favourite New Testament story.*
4. *Give reasons why you like this story.*

The liberation approach is a method that begins by insisting that God is a God of justice; a God who identifies with the poor and oppressed and who supports their struggle for justice. A liberation approach is mainly based on the story of Exodus, where God saw the suffering of the enslaved Israelites, heard their groans of pain and came down to deliver them by sending Moses to Pharaoh to say, “Let my people go” (Exodus 3). A liberation approach is also based on the fact that during his earthly ministry, Jesus spent a lot of time with the despised members of his society such as sex workers, tax collectors, the sick, the poor and women. When other teachers complained, Jesus said, “tax collectors and prostitutes will enter heaven before you” (Matthew 21:31). When you read a story from the perspective of liberation, therefore, you identify the oppressed and the silenced characters in the story. You read from their side. You seek to hear and make their voices and experiences heard. You read in solidarity with them—seeking to feel their pain and to initiate change in the social areas that oppress them. Given that the link between social injustice and the spread of HIV&AIDS is very strong, a liberation approach is vital to our reading the New Testament for compassion, hope, justice and healing. A liberation approach is the road that must take us on a new journey towards the Promised Land in which *justice for all is health for all*.

The feminist approach is another method of reading the New Testament and the HIV&AIDS story. It is a method that seeks the equal empowerment of men and women. A feminist approach starts from the assumption that women have been marginalised in society through socially constructed ideas about power. This social construction of men and women’s societal roles has marginalised women by denying them the power to make decisions, the power to own property, the power to lead, the power to speak and to be heard, the power to control their own bodies and the power to earn money from their services. The feminist method thus begins by identifying

how women and men are characterised in a story. It analyses how the presentation of men and women in a story endorses the tradition of marginalising women and empowering men. A feminist approach looks at how gender works with sexuality, class, age, ethnicity, disability, race and further marginalises women from power. After analysing both men and women, a feminist approach then attempts to re-read, to 'weave' a new story of justice for all. Given that research indicates that, "gender inequalities are *a major driving force* behind the AIDS epidemic" (UNAIDS 2000:21) a feminist approach is central to our goal of weaving a new story of compassion, justice, hope and healing in the HIV&AIDS context. Throughout this module we shall assess male and female relationships in the HIV&AIDS and New Testament stories with the understanding that *gender justice is imperative for the health of all*.

ACTIVITY 7

1. *Recall the relationships of men and women in your family.*
2. *Describe how power is distributed between brothers and sisters; fathers and mothers; uncles and aunts.*
3. *Think about how the power of decision and leadership is distributed in your church and national government between men and women.*
4. *Imagine and suggest how power can be redistributed justly between genders.*
Write down your answer in two paragraphs.

The inculturation approach is a method that recognises that the Bible was a foreign book of wisdom that came to dwell within the different cultures of Africa. Inculturation recognises African cultures as 'the good news stories' of African people. When we use inculturation, we read African traditional stories and orations along with biblical texts, without suggesting that any of the stories is more superior. Rather, inculturation regards African cultures and stories as a canon, an authoritative scripture/orature to African people. At the same time, it welcomes the biblical story as an additional story of life/wisdom. Inculturation is, therefore, a method of reading the biblical story within the cultural story in search of a story of life affirmation. Earlier on, I said that the good news of the New Testament also contains quite a number of horror stories. Similarly, in the African cultural canon, there are some horror stories as

well. Our task, when we use inculturation is to identify the horror stories within African cultures, and assess how they are handled. In this module, we shall use inculturation by asking you to think about how cultural perspectives can either promote or hinder the HIV&AIDS struggle.

SUMMARY

In this unit, we have journeyed together into three story worlds. The first story, which I described as a horror story, is the HIV&AIDS epidemic. We journeyed together assessing how this horror manifests itself by assessing how it was discovered, its magnitude, its link with social injustice, its attack on the marginalised, its huge care-giving demands and its stigma and discrimination. We concluded that *HIV&AIDS is a global horror story that affects everything and everyone*, raising spiritual, social and economic questions for PLWHA and the affected alike. We underlined that the HIV&AIDS horror story makes the search for new stories of compassion, hope, justice and healing imperative. For this reason, we then turned to the New Testament as a book of scriptural authority: a ‘good news story’.

Second, we journeyed into the New Testament story. We looked into the history of the New Testament composition and its literary families. We identified four types of literature in the New Testament; namely, gospels, history, epistles and apocalypse. We assessed the characteristics of each type of literature. We found that the gospels tell the story of Jesus’ deeds and teaching. History (Acts of the Apostles) tells us the story of the beginning and expansion of the church; the epistles are letters to new churches that needed pastoral guidance; and apocalypse, meaning the ‘uncovering,’ is a political literature of the oppressed.

Third, we then took a journey exploring methods of reading the New Testament and the HIV&AIDS story in search of new stories of compassion, hope, justice and healing. We assessed five methods: history, narrative, liberation, feminist and inculturation. A historical approach holds that New Testament is an ancient story, which must be studied within its historical context. The narrative method approaches reading the New Testament by seeking meaning through the stories. A liberation method insists that God is a God of justice and seeks to read on the side of the oppressed and silenced. Feminist methods approach text with an understanding that

men and women have not been equally empowered and seek to read for the empowerment of both. Inculturation insists that African cultures are canons; they are good news for African people, which should be read with biblical texts in search for new stories of life affirmation in the HIV&AIDS context.

The aim of our journey into the HIV&AIDS and New Testament stories is to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice and healing. The new stories must assist you as a learner of the New Testament in the HIV&AIDS context to read for prevention, for breaking HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination, for quality care and for counteracting the social injustices that fuel HIV&AIDS. In short, *our goal is to turn the horror story into a good news story*. Unit 1 was introductory, giving you the tools for weaving a new warm blanket of life, healing, hope, justice and compassion in a world invaded by the HIV&AIDS horror story of death, hopelessness, suffering and incurability.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

You have now finished unit 1. I believe you have learned from this unit. Does this make you better equipped to become a weaver of a warm blanket of compassion, hope, justice, healing—a defender of life? Are you ready to take a journey towards reading the New Testament for healing? To find out how much you have learned, answer the questions below. If you cannot answer some of the questions, please go back to the relevant sections and re-read.

1. Briefly tell the story of HIV&AIDS and show why it is a horror story.
2. Name the four literary families of the New Testament and outline the characteristics of each family.
3. List and describe five methods of studying/reading the New Testament. Show why these methods are important for reading the New Testament in the light of HIV&AIDS.



FURTHER READING

Barr, David. 1995. *New Testament Story: An Introduction*. New York: Wadsworth Company.

Dube, M. W. 2003. "Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Biblical Studies," pp. 10-23. In *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programs*. Geneva: WCC.

_____. 2003. "Social Location as a Storytelling Method of Teaching in HIV/AIDS Contexts," pp.101-112. In *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programs*. Geneva: WCC.

Thienchai, Lawrence. 2005. "Religion, Faith & HIV/AIDS: A Perspective From the Catholic Faith Tradition," pp. 34-42. In Wati Longchar. ed. *Health, Healing and Wholeness: Asian Theological Perspectives on HIV/AIDS*. Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA.

UNAIDS. 2004. *AIDS Epidemic Update December, 2004*. Geneva: UNAIDS. (Available from the internet www.UNAIDS.org).

Weinreich, Sonja and Christoph Benn. 2004. *AIDS: Meeting the Challenge, Data, Facts and Background*. Geneva: WCC.

PART 2

READING THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS

OVERVIEW

In unit 1 you were introduced to the HIV&AIDS epidemic, the New Testament and the methods of studying the Bible. You should be able to explain to someone that HIV&AIDS is a horrible and complex story that challenges us to seek a new and better reality. You should now be in a position to share with your study mates, neighbours or church mates the four families of New Testament literature. I also expect that you are now able to describe some methods of reading the New Testament in the context of the HIV&AIDS story.

In the next nine units, you will begin to read different New Testament books in the context of the HIV&AIDS epidemic. In Part two, consisting of units 2 and 3, you will be focusing on reading the synoptic gospels in the context of the HIV&AIDS story. Mark and Luke have been chosen from the family of the synoptic gospels. Further, particular passages have been chosen to deal with specific issues of the HIV&AIDS epidemic.

UNIT 2

THE GOSPEL OF MARK AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Hello and welcome to unit 2! In this unit, we will focus on the gospel of Mark. We will read three passages: Mark 1:40-45; 5:21-43 and 10:13-16, in the light of HIV&AIDS. The first passage will help us to focus on stigma and healing (1:40-45). The second passage will help us focus on gender empowerment, care-giving, hope, healing and youth empowerment (5:21-43). The last story will assist us to deal with empowering children and respecting their rights in the New Testament and HIV&AIDS context (10:13-16). The overall goal of reading these stories together is to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice, healing and life—good news stories that assist us to overcome the HIV&AIDS horror story in our families, churches, communities, countries and world.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ✂ Describe the history of Mark and its major themes
- ✂ Explain ways of de-stigmatisation and healing offered by Mark 1:40-45
- ✂ Discuss methods of gender and girl-child empowerment, hope, care-giving and healing offered by Mark 5:21-43
- ✂ Discuss models of child empowerment offered by Mark 10:13-16

TOPICS

Unit 2: The Gospel of Mark and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: A Brief History of Mark and Themes in Mark

Kingdom of God

Christology

Disciples

HIV&AIDS Stigma: “If You Choose... I do Choose” (Mark 1: 40-45)

Talitha Cum! HIV&AIDS, Gender, Youth, Hope and Healing (Mark 5:21-43)

⌘ Once Upon a Time!

⌘ Reading the Mark 5:21-43 Story With the HIV&AIDS Story

⌘ Weaving a New Story of De-stigmatisation, Hope, Healing and Life

Jesus Blesses Little Children in the HIV&AIDS Era (Mark 10:3-16)

Summary, Self-Assessment Activity, Further Reading

Introduction: A Brief History of Mark and Themes in Mark

Have you ever read the gospel of Mark? If not, try reading the whole book from the beginning to the end. You will find that it is an exciting story, which is told with much urgency and intrigue. Mark is written from an oral rather than written perspective. It features Jesus with his disciples, teaching and healing people from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he is crucified. One unique feature is that the disciples of Jesus have difficulty understanding his message. In fact, most of the time they misunderstand him (4:35-41), seek wrong things (10:35-44), at the end they betray him (14:10-11), deny him (14:66-72) and abandon him (14:50). Jesus dies on the cross, accompanied by his female disciples, who always followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem (15:33-40). The female disciples become the first witnesses of the resurrection (16:1-8). They are sent to inform the male disciples, but they run away in fear and never tell any one (16:1-8). I am sure you will agree that this is an intriguing story.

Do you know any history about Mark? You will be glad to know that Mark was the first gospel to be written out of the New Testament books. It was written around 65-70 CE, by a gentile author in Rome. It was most probably written by John Mark who was a disciple of Peter, who had been a disciple of Jesus. The author wrote because he wanted to tell the “*good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (Mark 1:1). According to M. A. Powell (1998:38-60) there are three main themes of the gospel of Mark:

The kingdom of God, that is, God’s reign or rule;

Christology, that is, the identity of Jesus;

Discipleship, that is, being followers of Jesus.

The Kingdom of God

The main theme of the good news of Jesus is that he taught about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God means God’s reign or rule. God’s rule or reign is realised when and where God’s will is done or honoured. In short, “God can only truly be said to rule when what God wants to happen takes place” (Powell 1998:51). Jesus thus speaks of the kingdom of God as both coming (in future) and already here (present). This presentation of the kingdom of God as being both present and future, emphasises that God’s reign should be done now and in future—that is, all the time.

Christology

In the story of Mark's gospel, Jesus is the main character. He is featured from the beginning to the end. In fact, the author begins by pointing out that what he is writing is the “*good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*” (Mark 1:1). Jesus is presented as a teacher, but above all as a healer. Mark underlines that “he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him” (3:10). Jesus is characterised as a secret Messiah (8:27-30); the Son of God (1:11; 9:7; 3:11; 15:39); son of man (2:10; 2:28; 8:31; 9:31 and 10:33-34).

Discipleship

The word disciple means follower. Are you a Christian? Then you are a disciple of Christ. The above opening paragraph indicates that in Mark's gospel, the disciples of Christ are presented strangely—they really do not seem to understand Christ nor to grasp his gospel. Why were they presented so negatively? Mark seeks to underline, perhaps, that it is possible for those who regard themselves as Christians, those who spend most of their time listening and reading the story of Christ, to completely fail to understand the message and vision of Christ. In the HIV&AIDS era, this warning is vital.

With this introduction, let us begin to assess our three passages: Mark 1:40-45; 5:21-43 and 10:13-16. We will read each of these passages in the light of HIV&AIDS. We will take journeys into each of these stories and look at them in the light of the HIV&AIDS story and make attempts to weave new stories of compassion de-stigmatisation, hope, healing and life.

HIV&AIDS Stigma: “If you choose...I do Choose” (Mark 1: 40-45)

In their study, *Needs Assessment Report of People Living With HIV/AIDS Stigma in Botswana*, Anneke Visser and Helen Ditsebe Mhone, define stigma “as the expectation of a stereotypical and discrediting judgment by oneself in a particular context” (2001:11). Do you remember how we defined HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination in unit 1? If not, please feel free to turn the pages back and re-read the section on “HIV&AIDS Stigma and discrimination”.

ACTIVITY 1

1. *List the consequences of HIV&AIDS stigma for prevention and care programs.*
2. *Outline some of the causes of HIV&AIDS stigma.*

Even in the good news of the Gospel of Mark, some people experienced stigma on the basis of their health. Take the journey into the following story of Mark 1:40-45.

ACTIVITY 2

Read the story below, twice.

1. *First, imagine that you are the leper. Describe how it feels.*
2. *Describe the concrete experiences you had as a leper.*
3. *Write down your feelings to the experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination.*
4. *Read the story for the second time and this time imagine that you are Jesus.*

Moved With Compassion

“If you choose... I do choose”

A person with leprosy came and knelt down and begging Jesus said, “If you choose, you can make me clean”. Moved with compassion Jesus reached out and touched the person, and said, I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately the leprosy went away, and the person was made clean. Jesus sent him away saying, “go show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as testimony to them”.

In the ancient New Testament times and before, people with leprosy were regarded as unclean and excluded from the whole community. *Leprosy was an incurable and infectious skin disease, which carried social stigma.* It is on these grounds that the leper said, “If you choose, you can make me clean” because his state of uncleanness was conferred on him by his society. If you choose, the stigmatised and socially rejected leper says, “You can give me a new story of compassion and healing”. That is, in as much as the society chose to stigmatise the lepers, society could choose to

change this status. Jesus begins to weave a new story for this leper. Please, note that this is a process that began with listening and hearing the leper. Thereafter, Jesus was:

Moved with compassion

Touched the leper

Replied the leper, "I choose to be clean"

Sent him to the priest for official and social recognition of his new status of healing.

Compassion is defined as the act of being able "to suffer with" someone else. In Setswana, we use the word '*Kutlwelobotloko*'. It means the capacity to feel the pain of the other. This identification is what enables us to understand the situation of the other and to seek change with them. As the above story indicates, *compassion should move us* to change the situation of those who are stigmatised, discriminated, feared, isolated and rejected. Jesus did this by embarking on the four-step process listed above.

ACTIVITY 3

1. *Write down the word used for compassion in your language.*
2. *Write down some of the proverbs or sayings in your society that encourage people to be compassionate.*
3. *Re-read Mark 1:40-45 for the third time in the light of HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination. Now begin to weave a new story of de-stigmatisation and healing. Write down, in two paragraphs, how you think this story can help you and your faith community to break the HIV&AIDS stigma and to become a compassionate church.*

"Talitha Cum! HIV&AIDS, Gender, Youth, Hope and Healing
(Mark 5:21-43)

Our second story is a very rich one. It has many layers to be explored. To take a journey into this story is to actually walk into the numerous pathways that reveal matters of stigma, poverty, gender, hope, caregiving, healing and life. Let me tell you a secret: this is one of my favourite New Testament stories. I tend to read and reread it many times. To make our journey a good revelatory experience, I propose that we should proceed by taking three steps:

1. Narrate the Mark 5:21-43 stories
2. Compare the story with the HIV&AIDS story
3. Identify the difference that Jesus makes

Once Upon a Time...!

In this story a man called Jairus who was a leader of the synagogues, came to Jesus, fell at his feet, and begged him repeatedly saying, “*My daughter is at the point of death. Come lay your hands on her so that she may be made well and live*”. Jairus implores Jesus to change the horror story of his dying daughter to a story of healing and life. Jesus agreed to come along with Jairus but a big crowd was following him. The story tells us that there was a woman in the crowd who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. This woman had “endured much under many physicians and had spent all that she had and she was no better, but rather she grew worse”. But when she heard about Jesus, she said to herself: “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well”. She pushed through the crowds. She stretched her hands. She touched the clothes of Jesus. And boom! Her bleeding stopped! Jesus stopped. He asked, “Who touched my clothes?” His disciples were surprised by his question. They said to him, “You see the crowd pressing on you, how can you say, ‘Who touched me?’” But Jesus stood still and persisted, “Who touched my clothes?” Jesus knew that someone touched him, for he felt power going out of him. He continued the search. He was looking around and asking, “Who touched my clothes?”

ACTIVITY 4

Women often suffer from a gendered stigma, that is, stigma associated with being a woman. For example, the state of menstruation supposedly makes women unclean. Women are also associated with evil or witchcraft. In the HIV&AIDS epidemic, they are often blamed for bringing the disease home and for killing their husbands.

1. *Describe how menstruation is viewed in your culture.*
2. *Explain, how women associated with sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) are treated in your culture?*
3. *Discuss how the cultural views of your country have exposed women to intensified HIV&AIDS stigma.*

The woman “came in fear and trembling, fell down before him and told him the whole truth”. She told Jesus about her long search for healing. She told him about her experiences with the various physicians—they did not want to touch her because she was unclean. She told Jesus how she lost all her money without being healed. It was a story that spanned twelve years. Jesus listened attentively to her. Time passed. Just when Jesus said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace,” messengers from Jairus’ house came with an announcement. The little girl is dead, do not bother the teacher anymore. Jairus was devastated. Jesus said to him, “Do not fear, only believe”. And they continued their journey to the house of Jairus. Upon arrival, they found crowds mourning, Jesus said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping”. The people laughed. But Jesus took the parents of the child and his three disciples, Peter, James and John to the place where the child was. He took her hand and said to her, “*Talitha Cum!*” which means, “Little girl, get up”. And immediately she got up and began to walk about.

ACTIVITY 5

Women and girls are the most vulnerable to HIV&AIDS infection.

- 1. Find out the HIV&AIDS infection rate of women and girls in your country in comparison to men and boys.*
- 2. Write down some of the reasons that make women and girl-children in your country more vulnerable to infection.*
- 3. Explain how Jairus and Jesus offer a new perspective on the value of women and girl-children’s lives. Explain your answers in two paragraphs.*

Reading the Mark 5:21-43 Story with the HIV&AIDS Story

When we read Mark 5:21-43 and HIV&AIDS stories together, we are struck by many similarities. In the HIV&AIDS epidemic we have many patients who have been sick for a long time—patients who have spent all they had searching for healing, but instead of getting better they got worse. We are struck by the presence of physicians, who have attended patients and received their money but could not heal them. We are struck by the stigmatised and isolated sick people. We are struck by sick and dying young people. We are struck by desperate parents who are trying to find healing for their children. We are struck by those who are weeping aloud for their dead children.

We are struck by women who are sitting at home, silently watching over their sick children and waiting for help to come until their children die. The story sounds too familiar. It is too close to our HIV&AIDS horror story.

ACTIVITY 6

Women are highly burdened by care-giving both for the sick and orphans.

- 1. Who are the HIV&AIDS caregivers in your family, church and country?*
- 2. Do you think Jairus and Jesus offer us a model of men as care-givers?*
- 3. Think of practical ways in which men can be involved in caring for the sick in your context. Write your answer in two paragraphs.*

Weaving A New Story of De-stigmatisation, Hope, Healing and Life

The most important question for you and me, my dear learner, is: How does Jesus turn the horror stories of his people into life-giving good news stories? You will note that that most importantly, touching Jesus brings healing. Touching Jesus, even in the midst of a large crowd, makes him to stop and want to meet and to listen to the person who touched him. Touching Jesus brings one into a new family, where one is welcomed as a daughter, rather than being stigmatised and isolated for health status. The difference that Jesus brings to a situation of desperation is related to the fact that he brings hope in hopelessness—by walking with the desperate parents, by listening to long stories, by allowing himself to be touched by unclean women and by touching a dead little girl and calling her back to life. The difference that Jesus makes is that he is fully present with the people and for the people who are suffering. Consequently, while the bleeding woman had searched for twelve years without any healing, she is suddenly healed and restored to the community as a daughter. Hope is restored and as Jesus says to a fearful parent, “Do not fear, only believe”. Indeed, hope is restored when Jesus makes those who mourn to laugh. Jesus, therefore, makes a difference by defying death—he calls a dead little girl back to life and she rises and starts walking about! As a disciple of Christ, a follower, you are also challenged to the same responsibility in the HIV&AIDS context.

ACTIVITY 7

HIV&AIDS has brought a great deal of hopelessness to many people.

- 1. Describe the forms of hopelessness confronted by the members of your family, community and church.*
- 2. Using the ideas of Mark 5:21-43, explain how you can mobilise your church to bring hope to the hopeless and to break HIV&AIDS stigma.*

The challenge is: How can we as Christians use our power to stand in the story of HIV&AIDS—happening in our countries, communities, churches and in our families—and pronounce hope and life in the midst of despair and death? How can we become God’s agents of hope and healing in a broken and hurting world, most forcefully dramatised by HIV&AIDS, stigma, poverty, hopelessness, care-giving, grief and death? This story gives us a model for weaving a story to confront and change the HIV&AIDS horror story. It is therefore a fitting duty for those who call themselves after the name of Christ—disciples—to make plans on how to call, “*Talitha cum*”. That is, we must call life back from the clutches of HIV&AIDS death, especially for our young people. We must make plans to hear our suffering women struggling to touch us for healing—and make time to listen to the long stories. This leads us to the next story of Jesus blessing children.

Jesus Blesses Little Children in the HIV&AIDS Era (Mark 10:13-16)

In the HIV&AIDS context, children have not been spared from the horror story. Some children are born with the virus if their parents were infected. Some children, particularly the girl-child, have been deliberately targeted for rape because of the erroneous myth which holds that virgins can cleanse the HI virus from an infected man through unprotected sex. Lastly, most children are affected by HIV&AIDS because it has killed their parents. Currently, there are 14 million orphaned children due to HIV&AIDS. Most children are left with old and poor grandparents, who do not have physical strength and cannot afford to meet all their material needs. Others have no grandparents and relatives and they end up being dispossessed, stigmatised, sexually exploited and subjected to child labour. Others end up in what are called ‘child-headed’ households.

ACTIVITY 8

1. *State the number of orphaned children in your country.*
2. *Describe some of the stories of orphaned children that you have heard.*
3. *Describe what your church is doing for orphaned children.*

Let us now turn from the HIV&AIDS story and look at Mark 10:13-16, an example of a kingdom story in which children are loved. Remember, earlier on we said that the kingdom of God means where God reigns, that is, where God's will is done. We discern God's will through the deeds and teachings of Jesus. Please, read the following story:

The Kingdom of God Belongs to Them

“People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to them. I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, will never enter it’. And Jesus took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them and blessed them” (Mark 10-13-16).

A number of things are notable from the above story. First, we note that children of ancient times were disempowered just like children of today. This is clear from the example, where the disciples, the followers of Christ, did not think that children had the right to come to Jesus. Hindering children from coming to Jesus or God, includes letting children suffer from HIV&AIDS stigma, rape, hunger, sexual exploitation, child labour, lack of guidance and love.

ACTIVITY 9

1. *Do you think your church is like the disciples—hindering children from coming to Jesus?*
2. *Explain what your church can do to empower and protect children.*

The major question for you to ask is: What is the difference that Jesus brings to the social world of children? Jesus says:

- Children should not be hindered to come to him
- The kingdom of God belongs to them
- They are the model of acceptable faith
- Jesus, who was a man, takes them in his arms and blesses them

In these acts and sayings, Jesus has moved children from powerless members of the world to powerful and respectable people. God's very kingdom belongs to them! Adults who aspire to enter God's kingdom; to know and do God's will, have children to look up to. In other words, children are empowered in the ethics of God's kingdom, both through having a space and having a voice. Moreover, Jesus sets an example for males—that men should hold and care for children and that they can and should actually bless children, instead of hurting or raping them. Jesus' teaching on children offers a theological position that challenges the church to protect and empower children, especially in this day of HIV&AIDS.

SUMMARY

We began this unit by taking a brief journey into the history and themes of the gospel of Mark. We said that Mark was the earliest gospel written—around 65-70 CE, in Rome. We identified the three major themes of Mark as: the kingdom of God, Christology and discipleship. We defined God's kingdom as God's will and rule. Christology is about the identity of Christ, who is defined through his teaching, deeds of healing and the several titles awarded to him.

The rest of unit 2, focused on three passages: Mark 1:40-45; 5:21-43 and 10:13-16 in the light of HIV&AIDS. The first passage helped us to focus on stigma and healing. The second passage helped us to focus on gender empowerment, caregiving, hope, healing, girl-child empowerment, death and life. The last passage assisted us to deal with the difficulties confronting children in the HIV&AIDS era and ways of empowering children and respecting their rights in the HIV&AIDS context. The overall goal of reading these passages is to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice, healing and life in order to counteract the HIV&AIDS horror story happening to us.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

You have now finished unit 2. I believe you have learned a lot in this unit. You took a journey into the HIV&AIDS and Markan stories. You made efforts to weave new stories of compassion, hope, justice and healing. To find out how much you have learned, answer the questions below. If you cannot answer some of the questions, please go back to the relevant sections and re-read.

1. Give a brief description of Mark's history and themes.
2. Using examples from our passages, what were the different forms of health related stigma experienced by people in the Markan stories?
3. What is HIV&AIDS stigma? How can Jesus' teaching help us to de-stigmatise?
4. Children, women and the girl-child are overly vulnerable to HIV&AIDS infection and the burden of care. Using examples from your country and the passages you studied, write to your religious leader on how their situations can be changed.



FURTHER READING

Dube, M. W. 2002. "Fighting and Crying With God: Who Cares for Children and Women in the HIV/AIDS Era?" In *Journal of Theology in Southern Africa* 114:31-42.

_____. 2004. "Mark's Healing Stories in an AIDS Context," pp. 379-384. In Daniel Patte and Nicole Duran. eds. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Dube, M. W., T.S. Maluleke, F. Cherinda, A. Mosupole, E. Chitando and I. Phiri 2003. "Children; The Boy Child & the Girl-child," pp.149-173. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Njoroge, Nyambura and Musa W. Dube. eds. 2001. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Pietmaritzburg: Cluster.

Powell, Mark Allen. 1998. "The Gospel of Mark," pp. 38-60. In *Fortress Introduction to the Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Tolbert, Mary Ann. 1992. "Mark," pp. 263-274. In Carol A. Newsom and Sharon Ringe. ed. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster Press.

UNAIDS. 2004. *AIDS Epidemic Update December, 2004*. Geneva: UNAIDS. (Available from the internet www.UNAIDS.org).

UNIT 3

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Hello and welcome to unit 3. In this unit we will focus on the gospel of Luke. We will first take a brief journey into the history and themes of Luke's gospel. Second, we will journey into three story worlds of Luke (4:16-22; 7:36-50; 19:1-10) and study them in the light of HIV&AIDS. The first story (4:16-22) will help us to focus on injustice and the social epidemics that fuel HIV&AIDS. Given that people living with HIV&AIDS are often stereotyped and stigmatised as sinners, the last two stories (7:36-19:1-10) will help us to focus on a Christ-centred approach to sin and sinners. The overall goal of journeying into these stories is to challenge you, dear learner, and the church, to be the very best disciples of Christ in the context of HIV&AIDS. We will do this by weaving new stories that arrest the spread and impact of HIV&AIDS by addressing social injustice and adopting a broader understanding of sin.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- ⌘ Describe the history of Luke's gospel and its major themes
- ⌘ Explain ways of dealing with social injustice offered by Luke 4:16-22
- ⌘ Discuss models of understanding sin and sinners Luke 7:36-50 and 19:1-10
- ⌘ Develop positive perspectives towards PLWHA

TOPICS

Unit 3: The Gospel of Luke and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: A Brief History of Luke and Themes in Luke

Social Injustice and the Spread of HIV&AIDS (Luke 4:16-22)

- ✝ “The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me”
- ✝ “To Bring Good News to the Poor”
- ✝ “To Proclaim Release to the Captives”
- ✝ “To Proclaim Recovery of Sight to the Blind”
- ✝ “To let the Oppressed Go Free”
- ✝ “To Declare the Year of the Lord”

Attitudes towards sin and sinners

“She has not Stopped kissing [me]” (Luke 7:36-50)

“Zacchaeus...I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:1-10)

Summary, Self-Assessment, Further Reading

Introduction: A Brief History of Luke and Themes in Luke

Luke is the third synoptic gospel in the New Testament. In this section we want to explore Luke; who wrote it, where and why. Let us begin with the question of authorship. Like most ancient documents, the authorship of Luke remains debatable amongst scholars. However, the general and long standing tradition has held that the author of Luke was a physician and a companion of Paul (Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24). What scholars are agreed about is that he must have been a very educated author, since his writing style and use of language reflect higher training when compared with other documents of the ancient times. It is believed that the Gospel of Luke was most probably written between 80 and 90 CE (Common Era).

But why was the Gospel of Luke written? The answer is stated in the opening of the gospel itself, which reads:

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, *to write an orderly account* for you, most excellent Theophilus, *so that you may know the truth* concerning the things about which you have been instructed (1:1-4).

From this opening of the gospel, we gather that the gospel of Luke was not the first story to be written. However, the author wanted to: Write an orderly account and write to the most excellent Theophilus so that s/he must know the truth about what s/he has heard. I am sure you are asking, “But who was “the most excellent Theophilus?” You will be glad to know that the name Theophilus means God (Theo) Lover (Philus), that is one who loves God. The author, therefore, wrote the gospel to those who are believers already—*those who love God*. As the above passage underlines, the intention is “that you may know the truth concerning the things which you have been instructed”. It was written for those who have already received Christian teaching. If you are a believer, then this Gospel was written for people like

you—to further build and confirm your love for God. In this unit, we will be re-reading Luke’s gospel in the light of HIV&AIDS.

Lastly what are some of the themes and characteristics of Luke? What, in other words, is the ‘truth’ that the author wanted the God lovers to know? Researchers of Luke have found that Luke’s gospel emphasises the following themes:

1. *Liberation:* Concern for the marginalised (the poor, women, widows, sex workers, children, the sick, Samaritans, etc) are major features. That is, the gospel of Luke depicts Jesus as standing with the discriminated members of the society, by spending a lot of time with them and depicting them positively, and sometimes much better than the respected members of the society. Some good examples on this theme include: 1:53; 2:36-38; 4:18; 6:20-21; 10:38-42; 16:19-31; 15:1-2; 18:9-14; 10:29-37 and 17:11-19. Given that HIV&AIDS research and documentation shows a strong link between social injustice and the epidemic, Luke’s emphasis on justice and liberation for the oppressed is a very important perspective for weaving new stories of healing, compassion and justice for the prevention of HIV&AIDS.

ACTIVITY 1

Read Luke 10:38-42 and 18:9-14 and outline how it highlights the themes of liberation from the passages.

2. *Salvation is Now:* The Gospel of Luke emphasises that salvation should be experienced now and today, not just in the future. Moreover, Luke’s gospel presents salvation as liberation and justice. That is, salvation refers to spiritual, social, economic and political liberation and justice. Good examples on this theme include: 2:11; 4:21; 5:26; 19:5, 9 and 23:43.

3. *Prayer and the Holy Spirit* are emphasised in Luke’s gospel (See 1:8, 15, 35, 41, 67; 2:25-27; 3:21-22; 4:1, 14, 18; 9:18-28; 23:47 and 24:53).

4. *Promise and Fulfilment*: The gospel of Luke presents Christian salvation as a continuation of God's promises and purposes made in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Christian salvation, therefore, appears within God's larger plan for the salvation of humankind. Some good examples include (Luke 2:23 and 38; 3:4; 4:4-10; 7:27-30; 22:37 and 24:44-46).

Social Injustice and the Spread of HIV&AIDS (Luke 4:16-22)

In unit one, we spoke about the link of the HIV&AIDS epidemic with social injustice. We realised that HIV&AIDS tends to link itself to poverty and other social inequalities such as gender, sexual, ethnic, race and age-related discriminations. Consequently, the most discriminated, marginalised and powerless members of our world such as the poor, women, children, youth, blacks, men who sleep with men, sex workers, injecting drug users, survivors of war and sexual abuse are the most likely to get infected. And once the marginalised are infected, they are likely to die faster due to lack of quality care (good eating, quality care and access to affordable drugs). Due to HIV&AIDS' link with poverty, 90 per cent of PLWHA are in the so called 'developing countries'. HIV&AIDS' link with social injustice also makes it *a complex story*. That is, we cannot and we should not easily allow ourselves to think that those who have HIV&AIDS are morally deficient. Mostly, PLHWA are socially disempowered groups who became exposed due to their social marginalisation. The question that we want to address now is how does the Gospel of Luke assist us to confront and struggle against social injustice? To seek an answer to this question, I invite you to journey with me to the short but powerful story of Luke 4:16-22.

"The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me!"

The story reads: "Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and read: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me*, because:

- God has anointed me to bring good news to the poor
- God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
- God has sent me to bring recovery of sight to the blind
- To let the oppressed go free
- To proclaim the year of the Lord's favour

The Luke 4:16-22 story continues on to say that Jesus “rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down” and that “the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him”. The story recounts that Jesus then said, “*Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*” and that “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth, they said, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’”

In this story of Luke’s gospel, Jesus gave his first public sermon. The major significance of these verses, as many scholars have noted, is that Jesus unveiled the agenda of his ministry and gospel. How can these verses help the church to confront HIV&AIDS challenges and reclaim the present and future? First, we note that Jesus did not *only* read from the words and book of Isaiah the prophet; rather, he identified himself with this prophet and took up his prophetic agenda by saying, “*Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*”. Jesus was thus not just quoting the words of a certain famous prophet called Isaiah. Rather, he said “*Today*” this scripture was being fulfilled among those who heard it. Here is the first major challenge: The church should not just preach the gospel, but must equally embody the gospel by saying, “*Today this scripture is being fulfilled in your own hearing*”. The church must actualise the gospel in the realities of our world and lives. Today, therefore, is the time for the good news of Christ to heal the broken communities from HIV&AIDS infection and from stigma and HIV&AIDS impact, which has produced fear, hopelessness and absolute desperation. Today is the day that we must welcome orphans, widows and PLWHA. Today is the day of healing. Today is the day that we must announce and implement liberation for those who are oppressed due social injustice—be it poverty, racism, gender inequality, ethnic or sexually related discrimination.

The story tells us that those who heard Jesus make such a bold announcement and identify himself with the prophets they were pleasantly surprised. The story tells us that there was silence and all eyes were fixed on him. The people were amazed. Then they began to ask, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” The listeners were asking, “Does God speak to such ordinary people like the son of Joseph?” Does God send ordinary daughters and sons of Joseph? The answer to this question is clear: God speaks to and through us all. Are we willing to take up our prophetic space and say, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for God has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor?” Are we willing to announce that this good news must be realised *today* in the here and

now of our world? For us to counteract the HIV&AIDS horror story, we need to embody and actualise the gospel of Christ in our communities.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Do you sometimes feel powerless about social injustice and structural causes of poverty and other social inequalities? State the reasons for your feelings.*
2. *Now that you know that the “Spirit of the Lord is upon you” as a Christian believer, write two paragraphs making suggestions on poverty eradication and the eradication of all other social inequalities in your community.*

Let us continue to examine the content of the gospel, unveiled in Luke 4:16-22. I would like us to examine each of the above bulleted points from Luke 4:16-22 individually. We shall therefore use each point as a sub-heading. As we take journeys into each part of the story of our passage, remember our task is to ask: How can this passage help us to weave new stories of healing and compassion—but above all stories of justice for our world in order to successfully fight the HIV&AIDS epidemic.

“To Bring Good News to the Poor”

I believe that when you bring good news to the poor, you are dealing with the structures and circumstances that have made some people or groups of people poor. It means that the gospel of Christ includes taking responsibility and challenging social structures that have condemned billions of people to poverty. As the story of creation tells us: In the beginning God created the earth and everything in it (Genesis 1:2). Then God created Adam and Eve in God’s image. In Genesis 1:27, God blessed both Adam and Eve and gave them the right to use all the resources of the earth. All of us, everywhere, therefore, have a God given right to have access to the resources of the earth—whether we are men or women, black or white, children or adults. Poverty creates situations in which some people are denied the right to have access to the resources of the earth. I am sure you will agree with me that poverty is therefore a violation of God’s will for all people. Those who are poor in this world have been denied their God given right; namely, that God gave all women and men access to the resources of the earth.

Today we know that the number one sponsor of HIV&AIDS is poverty. Sex workers who know about HIV&AIDS cannot stop their trade, for they figure out that HIV&AIDS will kill them perhaps in 5-10 years, but starvation will kill them much faster (NCA 2000:5-15). The poor, who have no access to education and information, remain ignorant of the way in which HIV&AIDS is spread and how they can protect themselves. The poor once infected cannot protect themselves from early death by eating well nor can they protect themselves from opportunistic infections as they lack funds and access to health services and resources. Many women who are married to unfaithful spouses dare not insist on faithfulness, safer sex or abstinence, as they fear losing their economic resources. Many orphans, who have been left with nothing, know very well about good conduct and how they can protect themselves from HIV&AIDS, but poverty leads many of them to sell their bodies in order to survive. Indeed, that Africa is the bearer of two thirds of HIV&AIDS is closely linked to its poverty.

ACTIVITY 3

1. *Identify the poor in your church and community.*
2. *Write down the reasons behind their poverty.*
3. *In two paragraphs, write to your church leader, outlining ways in which the church can assist in poverty eradication.*
4. *Outline community and national organisations that can work with the church to eradicate poverty.*

Lo and behold! ‘Preaching the good news to the poor’ is the number one item in the agenda of the gospel of Christ. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ to preach good news to the poor. Note that Jesus did not say he is going to be preaching good news to the poor who believe in him alone—but to the poor in general. In short, as the churches we need to recapture our prophetic role of bringing good news to the poor by denouncing all the social structures that deny people access to God’s resources and by being instrumental in setting up poverty eradication projects. As a church we are called to address economic social injustice. A major part of preventing the spread of HIV&AIDS and offering quality care to PLWHA and the affected includes our ability to deal with poverty in the society. Proclaiming good news to the poor was a number one item in the agenda of Christ, and here in Africa, particularly in the HIV&AIDS

era, it remains (and must remain) a top item. When we look at the life of Christ, we realise that he did not only announce that he has come to bring good news to the poor but throughout the gospel, he was found together with the most despised members of his society: tax collectors, sex workers, women, children and the sick. The gospels attest that other holy teachers even complained that Jesus hung around with unacceptable groups of people and Matthew 21:31 recounts that in response he said, “Truly, I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes will enter heaven before you do!”

“To Proclaim Release to the Captives”

The second item in the agenda of the gospel of Christ is “to proclaim release to the captives”. A captive is someone who has lost his/her freedom—the freedom to think, decide and act as he or she sees necessary. We thus have war captives, alcohol captives, sex captives, food captives, spiritual captives, social captives, poverty captives, greed captives, gender captives, drug captives, etc. Captives of all kinds are characterised by the fact that they are bonded, unable to exercise their God-given right to think, decide and act as free and responsible citizens. Captives do not have the right to speak and to be heard. Captives do not have the right to dream and implement their dreams. Captives do not have the power to make decisions over their own lives in society. Obviously, in the HIV&AIDS era those who are captives are not in a position to think and decide for themselves on measures that would protect them from infection. Who are the captives in your society, church or nations? What are you, yourself captive to? These are the questions that are worth your consideration. Would you say that in the HIV&AIDS era we are captives of fear, hopelessness and absolute desperation? In many ways, we are. Many women and girls, married and single, are captives of gender inequalities that often pass as culture, religion, scripture or law. Similarly, many so-called ‘developing countries’ are captives of international economic structures of oppression and exploitation that have made them captives of poverty. These countries cannot free themselves from the exploitative economic systems of the West. The gospel of Christ, if preached and lived out in our communities, countries and world, must set us free to live and love in full human dignity; and to live in the hope of victory and resurrection. The task of ‘proclaiming release to the captives’ is not just proclaiming the gospel verbally, but also taking the responsibility to implement the gospel *today!* The time is now.

ACTIVITY 4

1. *Identify some captives in your family and community.*
 2. *Explain how their captivity makes them vulnerable to HIV&AIDS infection.*
 3. *Outline ways in which the gospel of 'releasing the captives' can empower captives.*
 4. *Make a list of those who can partner with the church to 'set the captives free'.*
- Please write your answer down.*

"To Proclaim Recovery of Sight to the Blind"

The third item in the agenda of Christ's gospel is to proclaim "recovery of sight to the blind". While we may interpret 'blindness' metaphorically to include spiritual and mental blindness, this point underlines that an integral part of the gospel of Christ was physical healing. Indeed the physical, spiritual, social and mental well-being of a person are inseparable. Healing must involve healing all these aspects of a human being, for the human body is made in God's image and has God's breath.

Christ not only announced that the agenda of his gospel includes healing, he went out and healed people. In all the four gospels there is an overwhelming attestation that apart from teaching, Christ spent a better part of his earthly ministry healing the sick. Mark 1:32 may best capture this aspect of Jesus' ministry: "They brought *all who were sick or possessed with demons...* and Jesus cured many who were sick and cast out many demons". We cannot deny that a central aspect of the HIV&AIDS crisis lies in the fact that the virus sickens the body, the spirit, the mind and the community, and that it sickens one's social health through stigma. It is imperative that we should recapture the healing ministry of Christ. Once more, dear learner, the time is now.

ACTIVITY 5

1. *Who are the 'blind' people in your family, community and church?*
2. *Write a brief note to your pastor on "Making the blind to see": a strategy for getting the church to put pressure on governments and pharmaceutical companies to make AIDS drugs available to all who need them at affordable prizes.*
3. *List other groups that can work with the church in the above task.*

“To let the oppressed go free”

The fourth item in the agenda of the gospel of Christ is to “Let the oppressed go free”. According to Rosado Nunes, oppression defines a “social system that denies persons room to breathe and live as human beings” (1996:195). The biblical understanding of oppression as a denial of God’s justice is underlined in many texts (see also Isaiah 61:1-2a). Oppression can take forms of civil violence, intimate partner violence, racism, ageism, ethnic discrimination, sexual abuse and discrimination against those with disabilities, health and gender discrimination as well as economic, social and political oppression. There are many forms of oppressions in the world and in our communities. Of importance for the church is to remember that the gospel of Christ has listed ‘liberation from oppression’ as God’s will for all those who are oppressed. It is not God’s will that any person, anywhere, should be oppressed whether on the basis of their colour, their age, their gender, their sexual identity, their ethnicity, their nationality, their class, their addiction to drugs or by political and economic structures that deny people the room *to breathe and live as human beings*.

HIV&AIDS research has shown that HIV&AIDS is an epidemic within other epidemics. It works with and through other social epidemics such as civil war, ethnic discrimination, drug trafficking, the violation of children’s rights, gender and sexual discrimination, poverty, economic deprivations and national and international corruption (UNDP and Botswana Government 2000:42). After twenty-four years in the battle against HIV&AIDS, it has become clear that there is a close link between most forms of social oppression, the spread of HIV&AIDS and the lack of quality care for PLWHA and the affected. It is clear that the search for healing in this epidemic must equally address the accompanying social epidemics that fuel HIV&AIDS. Does the gospel offer useable stories for dealing with oppression in the world and how to deal with social evils? Yes. The good news of Christ includes, ‘letting the oppressed go free’—it includes granting liberty to the oppressed. It includes preaching good news to the poor. This is God’s will for all people, since all people were created by God and in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27). All people were blessed and given access to the resources of the earth (Genesis 1:29). If we implement this good news story in our societies, it will go a long way towards arresting the HIV&AIDS horror story.

ACTIVITY 6

1. Read Luke 18:1-8 and identify the oppressed and the oppressors.
2. Explain how the passage emphasises the need to give liberation to the oppressed.
3. Describe one or two stories about widows in your community and country.
4. Using Luke 18:1-8, write to the Mothers' Union (or any other relevant group) in your church and ask them to develop a plan to empower widows in your community.
5. List other community organisations that can work with on the above task.

"To declare the Year of the Lord"

Let us now look at the last item in the agenda of the gospel of Christ, which was to declare the year of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ to declare the year of the Lord. But what is the year of the Lord? The year of the Lord is the Jubilee. Its full description is given in Leviticus 25. It reads:

"...And the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be forty nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound...throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fifth year and *proclaim liberty* throughout all the land and to all inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to your possession and each of you shall return to his family...You shall not oppress one another" (vv. 8-17).

The integral idea behind the declaration of the jubilee is *liberation to all and for all*. It includes liberation of the land from exploitation, liberation of people from economic, political and social exploitation and oppression. The jubilee, in short, captures and underlines the gospel of Christ as the gospel that proclaims the good news to the poor, sets the captives free and restores sight to the blind. The gospel of Christ offers holistic salvation that touches all aspects of our lives: the political, cultural, social, economic, spiritual, mental, financial and the individual and communal liberation. This is the gospel, which the church can proclaim and programmatically implement in its quest to rebuild our world and its broken communities. You, dear learner, must be willing to be an active agent in bringing this good news story to realisation in our communities.

ACTIVITY 7

1. *Is your country regarded as a Christian country?*
2. *Write to your national leader (president or prime minister) and tell him/her about the Jubilee, that is, 'the year of the Lord'. Tell how you think it can help in the eradication of poverty and inequalities in your country.*
3. *Specify how the church can work with the government for poverty eradication.*

Attitudes Towards Sin and Sinners

Most probably, you know that one of the earliest responses to the HIV&AIDS epidemic was to associate it with sin and sinners. It was held that those PLWHA are immoral and are reaping the harvest of their sins (Russell-Coon 1990:39; Heath 2005:30). This attitude among believers was particularly not helped by the fact that the earliest medical discovery of HIV&AIDS was among the gay community, then among injecting drug users and among sex workers. The response of the churches was unfortunate for the following reasons:

- It stigmatised PLWHA as 'sinners who got what they deserved'
- The church then tended to approach PLWHA with the attitude that they needed to 'repent from [their] sins'
- This stigmatisation alienated the church from PLWHA
- It caused many PLWHA to go underground rather than feel safe to share their health status, a factor that continues to hinder their care
- The church missed an opportunity to offer a ministry of compassion and healing to PLWHA
- The church's attitude has created a tension that has not made it easy for PLWHA to view the church as a safer place of compassion and solidarity

Most churches have now realised that labelling PLWHA as sinful and immoral is unhelpful and untrue. For example, children who are born with HIV&AIDS; faithful spouses infected by their unfaithful spouses; those infected at work; those infected through rape or care-giving cannot be said to be sinners. Further, given that

HIV&AIDS is an epidemic driven by social injustice—particularly, affecting those who have been alienated from their human rights either by poverty, racism, sexual discrimination, violence or international injustice—means that we must think very carefully before we label anyone or any group as sinful. Remember that in unit 1 we said HIV&AIDS is a complex story, which is ethically demanding.

What then is the appropriate response? What passes as sin and sinful? First, we need to ask: What are the social, economic and political structures that have made Africa the centre of HIV&AIDS? We need to ask what makes women resort to sex work. Why are youth more vulnerable to HIV&AIDS? Why are gay men more vulnerable to HIV&AIDS? Why are black—worldwide—more vulnerable to HIV&AIDS than other groups? It is simplistic to think that Blacks are more promiscuous. Rather, the internationally driven and sustained poverty of Africa and most Two-Thirds World countries is the sin behind the spread of HIV&AIDS and following lack of quality care. The definition of sin, in other words, cannot *and should not* be reduced to individuals. Rather, we must also consider the structures that reduce certain groups of people to poverty, dehumanisation and exploitation, leading them to resort to criminal activities, hidden sexual identity, or sex work as a means of survival. We must consider international companies that are bent on selling cell phones to school-going children and youth, thus making them vulnerable to the sugar daddies' temptations.

Let us therefore examine how Jesus dealt with sin and the sinful. Two stories will illustrate the point: Luke 7:36-50 and Luke 19:1-10.

“She Hasn’t Stopped Kissing [me]!” (Luke 7: 36–50)

Let us journey together into the first story in Luke 7:36-50. Jesus was invited to eat at the house of a Pharisee. While he was there, there came a ‘woman of the city’—a sex worker. “The woman brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind Jesus at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet. Now, when the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw it, he said to himself, “If this man was a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of a woman this is—that she is a sinner”. Was Jesus ignorant of her identity? Apparently not. Did Jesus say, ‘stop kissing me you sinful sex worker?’ Apparently not. The story says she was kissing Jesus continuously. Jesus let her kiss

him unceasingly. *Jesus only spoke in response to those who were judgmental, those who were labelling her a sinner. He said:*

“Do you see this woman? I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you her sins, which were many, have been forgiven. Then Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your sins are forgiven....’ And again Jesus said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you, go in peace.’”

ACTIVITY 8

1. *Describe how the church deals with sex workers in your country.*
2. *In a paragraph, write to your pastor using the above story and suggest ways in which the church can become a welcoming and healing church to the marginalised.*
3. *List groups that can network with the church to address the plight of sex workers.*

I am sure you will agree with me that as the Christian church we can learn a lot from this story, given the persistence of HIV&AIDS stigma. The church is challenged to realise that those who come crying—those bruised by oppressive social structures that expose them to infection—must have the freedom to approach the church space, as a safe space, to lament for their broken hearts, bodies and societies. Their lament in itself is part of their healing. But even more importantly, their lament is a prophesy unto all of us and the whole world. Their lament is their story to us, which we must hear with compassion. Faith communities and leaders must, therefore, cultivate the church as a safe space for those who need a crying space and to love God—for whom they have come seeking in religious institutions. As this biblical story highlights, the gospel hardly expects the church to judge those who are weeping for their broken lives. Rather, we must create a space for compassion where lamenting and weeping can take place. In such a space the spiritual, mental and social healing of PLWHA and the affected will occur.

“Zacchaeus...I Must Stay at Your House Today!” (Luke 19:1-10)

Let us now look at Luke 19:1-10 and assess how Jesus approaches sinners. When we journey into the story of Luke 19:1-10, we encounter Jesus welcoming Zacchaeus, a tax-collector, who had enriched himself by over-taxing people. Zacchaeus was a tax collector for the Roman Empire, the oppressor of Jewish people. When Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was passing by, he ran and climbed a tree and looked down. He wanted to see Jesus. Jesus looked up the tree and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house *today*” (v. 6). As Zacchaeus was joyfully coming down to welcome Jesus to his house the story says, “*All* who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘Jesus has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner’” (v. 7). Meanwhile Zacchaeus said to Jesus, “I will give half of my possession to the poor and if I have defrauded anybody, I will pay back four times as much”. Jesus said to him, “*Today* salvation has come to this house”. We note here that Jesus never said to Zacchaeus, “You sinner, repent!” Rather, he gave friendship to Zacchaeus, a man who was a tax collector to the Roman Empire, hence, socially judged and rejected by all—for they ‘all’ called him a ‘sinner’. Zacchaeus was in a dire need of social and spiritual healing. The welcoming act led Zacchaeus to a voluntarily confession and repentance.

ACTIVITY 9

All regarded Zacchaeus as a sinner.

- 1. List groups of people regarded as sinners by your church and community.*
- 2. Using the story of Zacchaeus, write to your church leaders and suggest ways of breaking the social stigma of labelling certain groups of people as sinners.*
- 3. List names of community groups that can work with your church in the above task.*

Let us conclude this section about the understanding and approach to sin and sinners. Even if the church thinks that PLWHA and the affected who come crying are sinners, I still want to underline that the church has no business dwelling on their sins. Rather *the church’s business is the gospel—the good news of Christ*—it is to comfort the broken hearted and give assurance that whatever their sins, all are forgiven. The business of the church, as bearers of the gospel of Christ, is to declare and pronounce peace to the troubled hearts, minds and bodies in our communities. Jesus welcomed and loved them. Our business is to denounce those powers that are the architects of

exploitative and oppressive structures that cause the brokenness of individuals and communities. This is the healing and prophetic gospel of Christ—the healing that Christians and faith leaders can bring to the community in this HIV&AIDS struggle. Both the story of Zacchaeus and of the ‘street woman’ underline that if we live out the gospel of Christ, then we have many useable answers for our HIV&AIDS troubled world. Generally, in our exploration of what constitutes sin and how we should respond to it, we came to realise that sin is more than just individual. This understanding calls for a broader definition of sin. We should:

- Redefine sin as the social, economic and political structures that deny some members of the earth community their full human rights
- Realise that Jesus spent his time with the marginalised members of his society—without condemning them—possibly because he knew they were victims of social structures that oppressed and reduced their humanity
- Even where people can be proven to be sinners, the Christian approach should not be that of condemnation, but of forgiveness and compassion
- Realise that none of us are sinless; rather we are saved by grace not our good works. We do well to remember that Jesus said, “If anyone among you has never sinned, let him/her be the first one to throw a stone” (John 8:9)

SUMMARY

In unit 3 we focused on the gospel of Luke. We realised that it is a powerful good news story that can successfully eradicate the horror story of HIV&AIDS in our midst if proclaimed and implemented. First, we explored the history and themes of Luke’s gospel. We outlined some of the main themes as: liberation for the socially marginalised groups; salvation as now; prayer and the Holy Spirit; promise and fulfilment. Secondly, we read three passages: Luke 4:16-22; Luke 7:36-50 and Luke 19:1-10 in the context of HIV&AIDS. The first passage helped us to focus on the social epidemics that fuel HIV&AIDS and how the gospel story can assist in eradicating the horror stories of injustice and inequalities in our communities. When the church has understood that proclaiming the gospel of Christ entails taking a prophetic stance and when the church proclaims and implements the gospel in our communities, countries and continent—then the church will be a formidable force

against the HIV&AIDS epidemic and injustice. The church will become a powerhouse of healing. But for such a church to come into being, it must begin with you embodying the good news story and taking up the role of saying, ‘*Today* this scripture is being fulfilled in your midst’.

Given that people living with HIV&AIDS are often stereotyped and stigmatised as sinners, in the last section we focused on the Christian approach to sin and sinners. We concluded that in the light of the social injustice and inequalities that drive HIV&AIDS, sin is more than just an individual act. Rather, sin is embedded in social, economic and political structures that reduce people’s humanity through inequality and social injustice. Jesus demonstrated his solidarity with the most marginalised ‘sinners’ by welcoming them, giving them compassion and not condemning or labelling them as sinners. The overall goal of reading these stories is to help you, my dear learner, to be the very best disciple of Christ in the context of HIV&AIDS and to encourage the Christian church to do the same. The stories challenge you to weave new stories of liberation and healing that can arrest the impact of HIV&AIDS by addressing social injustice and adopting a broader understanding of sin.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

1. Re-read the section on themes in Luke’s gospel. Outline how those themes re-occur in the three passages discussed above (Luke 4:16-22; 7:36-50 and 19:1-10).
2. Elaborate on how Luke 4:16-22 can assist the church to address social injustice which fuels the spread of HIV&AIDS.
3. Write a one page essay on how Luke’s perspective on sin and the sinful can assist your church and community to fight HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination.



FURTHER READING

Akintunde, Dorcas O. 2003. "The Attitude of Jesus to the 'Anointing Prostitute': A Model for Contemporary Churches in the Face of HIV/AIDS in Africa," pp. 94-112. In Isabel Phiri. etl. *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietmaritzburg: Cluster.

Chitando, E. 2003. "National Injustice: Luke 4:16-22," pp. 253-255. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Dibeela, P. M. 2003. "Poverty & Economic Justice," pp. 220-225. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Dibeela, P. M. and A. Musopole. 2003. "Repentance, Forgiveness and Love," pp.112-120. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Dube, M. W. 2004. "Grant Me Justice! Towards Gender-Sensitive Multi-Sectoral HIV/AIDS Readings of the Bible," pp. 3-26. In M.W. Dube and M. R. A. Kanyoro. eds. *Grant Me Justice! HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. New York: Orbis.

_____. 2003. "The Prophetic Method in the New Testament," pp. 43-58. In M. W. Dube. ed. *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV&AIDS in Theological Programs*. Geneva: WCC.

Powell, Mark A. 1998. "The Gospel of Luke," pp. 85-111. In *Fortress Introduction to the Gospels*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Upkong, Justin. 2004. "Luke," pp. 385-394. In Daniel Patte. ed. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Part III:
READING THE ACTS OF THE
APOSTLES IN
THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXT

UNIT 4

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE
HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Hello and welcome to unit 4! In unit 2 and 3 you were introduced to the gospels of Mark and Luke. The gospels introduced you to the story of Jesus—what he taught and did to address the social horror stories of his time. We asked how his gospel could assist us to overcome the HIV&AIDS horror story in our world.

In unit 4, you will be introduced to the history and themes of the book of Acts. In particular, you will be introduced to the story of the early church—what it taught and did. You will look at how the church began and grew soon after the death and ascension of Jesus. You will learn that the author of Luke is the same author of Acts. You will also examine how the early church made admirable efforts to live out the message of liberation as the Gospel of Luke presented it. Then we will examine how the story of the early church can assist us to confront HIV&AIDS.

You will study the book of Acts by focusing on two passages. First, Acts 2:1-21, which will assist you to examine the very foundation of the church. Second, Acts 2:43-47, which will assist you to examine how the early church lived out the gospel of equality and liberation as taught by Christ in the gospels. Lastly, you will study how

the early church took care of widows (Acts 6:1-7) and examine how the story can assist us to have a better informed approach to widows in the HIV&AIDS context.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of unit 4, you should be able to:

- ✂ Describe the history and themes of Acts
- ✂ Explain how the early church began
- ✂ Describe how the early church eradicated inequalities
- ✂ Discuss how the early church cared for their widows
- ✂ Analyse how the story of the early church can inform the struggle against HIV&AIDS.

TOPICS

Unit 4: Acts of the Apostles and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: A Brief History of Acts and Themes in Acts

The Early Church Living out the Message Liberation

✂ “I will Pour My Spirit Upon All Flesh!” (Acts 2:1-21)

✂ “They had All things in Common” (Acts 2:43- 47)

Serving Widows: Acts 6:1-7 and 9:36-43

Summary, Self-Assessment Activity, Further Reading

Introduction: A Brief History of Acts and Themes in Acts

There are two significant verses that are central to the history and themes of Acts. These are: Acts 1:1-5 and Acts 1:8. Let us journey into the story of the first five verses, which read as follows:

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when Jesus was taken to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom Jesus had chosen. After suffering, the living Jesus met the apostles by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during the forty days and speaking about the dominion of God. While staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of God. “This,” Jesus said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptised with water but you will be baptised in the Holy Spirit not many days from now”.

What does the journey into the story of Acts 1:1-5 tell you? First, we note that the verses refer to the ‘first book’. Secondly, we realise that this opening like that of the Gospel of Luke is directed to ‘Theophilus’. What does this suggest? Many scholars have concluded that this gives us a clue into the author and date of Acts. In other words, the author of the gospel of Luke is the same as the author of Acts. The ‘first book’ here, refers to the Gospel of Luke. They have also concluded that both the gospel of Luke and Acts were written about the same time, that is, between 80 and 90 CE by Luke the physician.

ACTIVITY 1

1. *Do you remember what the name ‘Theophilus’ means? If not, go back to unit 3 and read the history section and write down its meaning and relevance to you.*

The purpose of the book of Acts is also evident from its opening passage. The gospel of Luke was written to tell the story of Jesus' life, his teaching and deeds. Acts was written to tell the story of the early church following its beginnings in Jerusalem and as it expands across the ancient world. This is particularly expressed in Acts 1:8, which features Jesus speaking to his disciples just before he ascended to heaven. It reads: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth". This verse in fact lays out the programme and growth of the early church—from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Chapters 1-11 focus on the growth of the church, featuring the activities of Peter. From chapters 12-28, the book of Acts features Paul's preaching up to Rome, where he most probably died. The major aim of the book of Acts, therefore, is to narrate the history of the early church, beginning with the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the upper room. We are told that among those who were waiting for the promise were: "All those who were devoting themselves to prayer together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts 1:12-14). With this introduction, let us therefore turn to that moment when the promise 'to receive power' was fulfilled, in Acts 2:1-21. I would like us to assess how the arrival of power was based on the gospel message of liberation and equality.

The Early Church Living the Message of Liberation

Covenant 10: Justice and HIV&AIDS

You shall remember, proclaim and act on the fact that I am the Lord your God, who sees, hears, and knows the suffering of God's people and who comes down to liberate them (Exodus 3:1-12; Luke 4:16-22). You shall, therefore, declare the jubilee and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all its inhabitants (Leviticus 25:10) for unless and until justice is served to all people in the world, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, HIV&AIDS cannot be uprooted. The HIV/AIDS Covenant Document (AACC 2003).

The *HIV/AIDS Covenant Document* was adopted by the All Africa Conference of Churches at its Eighth General Assembly held in Yaoundé Cameroon. A *covenant* is an agreement or a contract that is entered by two or more parties. A covenant is a binding document, that is, those who enter it must abide by its terms. The *HIV/AIDS Covenant Document* therefore captures the commitments of the church in its fight

against HIV&AIDS. Covenant 10 (above) focuses on justice. It emphasises that “unless and until justice is served to all people in the world, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream, HIV&AIDS cannot be uprooted”. Given the link of HIV&AIDS with social injustice, Covenant 10 should be taken very seriously. Social injustice refers to a social system of inequalities that empower some individuals or certain groups of people while the rest are disempowered. The disempowerment might be on the basis of nationality, race, ethnicity, age, gender, class, ability, health or caste. According to HIV&AIDS research and documentation, “The starting point for an adequate response is the understanding that *any bid to halt the AIDS epidemic has to include determined efforts to eradicate poverty and to drastically reduce inequalities*. Such efforts would include support for greater social mobilisation among the poor, as well as empowerment programmes” (UNDP and Bots. Govt. 2000:56). In short, my dear learner, we need to seriously realise that “unless and until justice is served to all people in the world, until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream, HIV&AIDS cannot be uprooted”.

Do we have stories that show how the church can model social justice to the world? Yes. Some passages are provided for you in Covenant 10, above. The first one is Exodus 3:1-12, where God said “I have *seen* the suffering of my people who are in Egypt; I have *heard* their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed *I know their suffering*, and *I have come down to deliver them* from the Egyptians and *to bring them up out of that land* to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (vv. 7-8). In these verses, God speaks to Moses about the situation of enslaved Israelites. God takes their side and begins a programme to establish their liberation. God is depicted as a God of justice. The God of Justice is described in the above italicised verbs as one who *sees, hears, knows, comes down* and *brings out* oppressed people from their suffering. God is first and foremost, a God who takes sides with the poor and oppressed and works with them for their liberation.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Are you a Theophilus, a God lover?*
2. *If your answer is yes, then propose a programme for setting the captives in your community free.*

The second passage of Covenant 10 should guide the believer/s in the fight against HIV&AIDS to become guardians of justice. This concept is based on Luke 4:16-22 and Leviticus 25, which we discussed extensively in unit 3. In Luke 4:16-22, we realised that for his first sermon Jesus began by saying, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor”. The books of Exodus and Luke both emphasise that God and Jesus Christ are on the side of liberation and justice. The question now is do we have stories of the church being a church that observes justice, following on the footsteps of God and Christ? The three stories that we shall examine in Acts shall highlight the early church as a justice loving church.

“I Will Pour My Spirit Upon All Flesh” (Acts 2:1-21)

In this section we take the journey into the story of the arrival of the “promised power” (1:8) and we hear that:

When the day of Pentecost had come, *they were all together in one place*. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting, divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues*. Now they were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem...all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does it mean?’ But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine’.

ACTIVITY 3

1. *Please go back to unit 3 and read the section on themes of Luke’s gospel.*
2. *Write down how the theme of prayer and the Holy Spirit is featured in Acts 2:1-21.*

I have highlighted some phrases in the above passage. Both of them share the word ‘all’. In short, the Spirit of Power that Jesus had promised his followers before his departure (1:8) was given indiscriminately to *all believers*. How did this power manifest itself to those who received it? Not only were there tongues of fire on their heads, they also “began to speak in other tongues”. All were empowered to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. They were, in other words, given the power to speak, for one cannot carry out the good news without the power to speak and be heard.

In the HIV&AIDS era, we need to remember that many people are silenced. Some are silenced through racism, gender inequality, age, poverty, ethnicity, and sexual identity. Some are silenced through stigma, especially when we conclude that PLWHA are immoral. The stigmatisation silences those who want to tell their stories, whether they are stories of betrayal, violence, repentance, care-giving, pain or anger—we need to create a space where all can exercise the power that was given to all; namely, the power to speak and to be heard. People who have no power to speak and be heard are disempowered and oppressed people. The fact that the Spirit of Power enabled *all believers* to speak underlines that all believers were equally empowered to proclaim the gospel, the good news of Christ.

ACTIVITY 4

1. *Describe a situation where you were silenced and could not speak your thoughts. How did this make you feel?*
2. *Identify the silenced people in your family, community and church.*
3. *In the HIV&AIDS epidemic, who are the silenced people in your context? Write down your answers.*

Just as Jesus opened the gospel of Luke (4:16-22) with the saying, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to *preach* the good news to the poor,” the early church was also started with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Power and the Spirit of God—that allows all believers to speak and to *proclaim* the good news of Christ from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The Spirit of Power and fire is also upon you my dear learner. It is the Spirit that enables you to speak and be heard.

Spectators who heard the first believers speaking in tongues thought that they were drunk. Peter stood up to explain, saying

Indeed, they are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days it will be, God declares,
That *I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh*
And your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams,
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
In those days *I will pour out my Spirit* and they shall prophesy.

Peter explains that the coming of the Spirit is the fulfilment of God's promise—the prophecy of Joel. Peter underlines that the 'power' of the Spirit that allows people to speak and to be heard is being poured upon the flesh of *all* believers. He goes on to explain what he means by 'upon all flesh' by outlining that it includes people of both genders (sons and daughters); people of all ages (young men and old men); and people of all classes (even slaves). In so doing, Peter underlines that the church is founded on a gospel of equality and liberation. Gender, age or class bias will not be part of the church. Rather, God empowers all of us regardless of our race, ethnicity, gender, age, class or sexual identity. This is the gospel (the good news) of Christ as it was preached in Luke 4:16-22. In this verse Jesus says that he has come to preach good news to the poor; to set the captives and the oppressed free; to give sight to the blind; and to declare the year of the Lord. The early church is founded on the same principles of equality, justice and liberation for all. In short, the Spirit of Power has been poured upon 'all flesh'—enabling us to say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me for he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor... to declare the year of the Lord".

I believe you know HIV&AIDS is an epidemic that is driven by the following social inequalities:

- Poverty (unequal distribution of wealth between the poor and rich)
- Gender (unequal distribution of power amongst men and women)
- Age (unequal distribution of power between young and older people)
- Sexuality (unequal distribution of power between sexual identities)
- Health status (unequal distribution between PLWHA and those not infected)
- Race (unequal distribution of power between blacks and whites)
- Ethnicity (unequal distribution of power between different ethnic groups)
- Migrant status (unequal distribution of power between citizens and foreigners).

It is the socially disempowered members of the above listed groups that are more likely to be infected by HIV and to lack quality care. Inequalities are the pathways, through which HIV&AIDS creeps through our families, communities, churches, countries and world. As we said earlier, the struggle against HIV&AIDS must also be a struggle against social inequalities, which leave many powerless, silenced and unable to protect themselves. Maintaining social inequalities is not helpful for anyone since we are, whether we like it not, interconnected. What affects your neighbour is likely to affect you. So the members of our earth community who are disempowered for any of the above reasons are badly affected, and what affects them will affect all of us. Creating and maintaining social justice and equality is therefore good and healthy for all of us. God's agenda of the gospel embraces and promotes social justice to and for all (Luke 4:16-22).

Acts 2:1-21 describes the first day—the birthday—of the early church. It is therefore of great excitement to me, as I believe it is also to you, that the beginning of the church is presented as a realm of the empowerment for all people: “*I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh!*” Please, repeat the italicised sentence. And the Spirit of Power is indeed poured upon all of us. Here we realise that the early church is presented as the model of an egalitarian community where all people are empowered. In the HIV&AIDS era the church needs to model this community of equality. Inequality and disempowerment are in fact the root cause of ill-health, particularly of HIV&AIDS.

ACTIVITY 5

1. *Explain how your church deals with class, age, gender, race, disability and ethnic and sexual differences.*
2. *Using Acts 2:1-21, write a letter to your church leader and make suggestions on how the church should eradicate social inequalities in your community.*
3. *List other community organisations that can work with the church on this project.*

I am sure you are wondering if the early church really empowered all groups and truly attempted to live as a community of equals? Did they? I understand your concern, for most of the time we tend to live with inequalities and it is hard to imagine a different model. Let us now turn to Acts 4:43-47 to examine how the early church practically lived the message of equality and liberation.

“They Had All things in Common” (Acts 2:44-47)

Let us take our journey further into the story of the early church by reading Acts 2:44-47. Hopefully, it will help us to weave stories of justice, compassion and healing in our HIV&AIDS contexts. The story reads:

All who believed were together and *had all things in common*; they would sell their possessions and goods and *distribute the proceeds to all as any had need*. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day God added to their number those who were being saved.

ACTIVITY 6

Re-read the above passage and answer the following questions:

1. *What does it mean that believers, “together had all things in common?”*
2. *What does it mean that, “they would sell their possession and distribute their proceeds to all, as any had need?”*

The above passage is very important for it shows us that the early church practically lived out its gospel message of equality and liberation as preached by Jesus in the gospels. They put their faith into action. The passage underlines that the believers were united and lived by a principle of equality that sought to eradicate poverty. This model of equality (which may be unthinkable in our increasingly individual, indifferent, profit oriented world) needs to be recaptured by the Christian church. I am sure you will agree with me that unless the believers embody the vision of justice to, for and with all, then the church can hardly prophesy to the world of economic inequalities and injustice. Given that poverty is the number one issue that drives HIV&AIDS, it is critical that the church and Christians should revisit the gospel of Christ as propounded by Jesus (Luke 4:16-22) and implemented by the early church (Acts 2:44-47). I believe these stories of Jesus and the early church can help us to weave a new healing story in the HIV&AIDS era—a story of a justice-loving world.

ACTIVITY 7

1. *Describe how your church compares with the early church.*
2. *Write to your church minister and make suggestions on how you can bring your church closer to the early church where they “had all things in common and where they distributed proceeds to all as any had need”.*
3. *Make suggestions on how your church can work with the government and NGOs to establish a system in which goods are distributed ‘to all’ according to their needs.*

Serving Widows (Acts 6:1-7)

Widows are one of the most disempowered groups in the HIV&AIDS era. Since in most cultures women do not have power to own property, to make independent decisions or to control their bodies, widows are a group of women who can easily find themselves seriously oppressed and in desperation after the death of a husband. This can be especially true if the widow has no son to act as her guardian. Widows in patriarchal (male-centred) cultures are silenced. In patriarchal cultures, where women have no right to inherit the property of their late husband, a widow is often inherited either by the elder brother of the dead husband or one of the closest relative (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Genesis 38:11-26). A widow with no son and no one to

inherit her could become desperately poor and powerless (Ruth 1-4 and Luke 18:1-6). As one widow put it: “We are not protected against anything. Widows are without families, without houses, without money. We become crazy. We aggravate people with our problems. We are the living dead” (Nathaniel 2001:3). In the biblical cultures which were also patriarchal, it was known that widows are among the most powerless members of the society. Consequently, in biblical times much care was taken to protect widows. For example, Exodus 22:22 says, “You shall not abuse any widow or orphan”. James, which is one of the most Jewish New Testament books, underlines this perspective saying that, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in distress” (1:27).

As you probably know, in the HIV&AIDS context widows are amongst the most vulnerable groups. In some cultures, they are subjected to rituals that can aid the spread of HIV&AIDS. For example, there are some cultures where a widow needs to be cleansed to avoid the re-visitation of death in the family. In some cultures, the sexual cleansing ritual is carried out by a designated widow cleanser. This person cleanses all widows in the community. In other cultures the ritual of widow cleansing is carried out by a designated relative from the family of the widow’s in-laws. Such a ritual means that the HIV&AIDS virus can be easily passed if the widow is positive or if the cleanser is infected. The cultural practice in which the widow is inherited by a close relative also contributes to the spread HIV infection. This happens when the widow is infected with HIV or if the inheritor is infected.

ACTIVITY 8

1. *Describe your cultural approach towards widows.*
2. *Explain how the approach protects or exposes widows to HIV infection.*

Increasingly, widows are dispossessed and thrown out of families empty handed by their in-laws. This dispossession is often motivated by various factors such as greediness, unwillingness to have the widow inherit the property and the fear of providing her a close relative to marry, in the case that she is infected. In such cases, widows may be accused of witchcraft and then thrown out of the family empty handed, sometimes with children and sometimes without. Dispossession also does not

ease the spread of HIV, for such desperate widows are sometimes forced to resort to sex work, thus exposing themselves to infection or exposing others to infection. I am sure you will agree with me that it is important that widows' rights should be recognised as God given human rights—the Spirit has been poured upon all flesh and Jesus' good news sets all the captives free. Empowering widows calls for re-imagining of our male-female relationships along the lines of justice for, to and with all—enabling all people to speak and to be heard.

Early Church's Ministry to Widows (Acts 6:1-7)

Let us now turn to our short passage in Acts 6:1-7. This text causes us to ask three questions: 1) What were the challenges confronting widows during the time of the early church; 2) How did the early church handle them; 3) And lastly, how can the story of the early church assist us to empower widows in our patriarchal societies today, especially in the HIV&AIDS era? Let us now journey to the story of the early church and discover how they addressed their unpleasant stories. Please read Acts 6:1-7 so we can answer to the above questions.

In the first question, we are seeking to identify the problem confronting widows in the early church. According to the passage, “During those days, when the *disciples were increasing in number*, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because *their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food*” (6:1). The early church was growing in number and in the process the distribution of food left out some widows. It is notable that the widows that were left out were Hellenist widows. Remember, the early church began in Jerusalem, among Jewish people. As the church was growing, people of different races such as Hellenists, also joined. Their cultures however, were different. So even if the “Spirit was poured upon all flesh”, the early church was still learning to live harmoniously. Culturally, the Jews and Hellenists did not eat together.

How then was the problem addressed? First, you will note that the Hellenists made it a point to report what is happening. So in any situation, someone has to identify the problem and speak out, especially for the most vulnerable members of our society. This should get you thinking about who speaks for our widows today? Who points out that many widows are in terrible situations in the HIV&AIDS era? Second, the

passage tells us that in response, “The twelve called together the whole community and said, ‘Select from among yourself seven people of good standing...whom we may appoint to this task’” (v.3). The passage continues to say, “What they said pleased the whole community and they chose Stephen, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus” (v.6). What we note here is that the leaders listened and responded to the report about widows. But instead of solving the problem on their own, the twelve gathered the community and asked the community to choose leaders who would ensure that no widows are left out. This story is instructive for all of us: the whole community must respond to reports of suffering. Together we must solve our social problems. This story of the early church indicates to us that the wellbeing of widows is therefore our responsibility—everybody’s business.

ACTIVITY 9

Read Acts 9:36-43 and attempt the following:

- 1. Explain how widows are cared for in the passage.*
- 2. Using the story of the Dorcas/Tabitha, write a two-paragraph proposal to your Mothers’ Union (or other relevant groups) proposing a way of caring and empowering widows in your community.*
- 3. List organisations that can partner with the churches to better meet the widows’ needs.*

SUMMARY

In this unit we began by exploring the history and themes of Acts. We noted that Acts was most likely written by the author of Luke’s Gospel because they share the same opening, the same audience (Theophilus), the same style and themes. We pointed out that Acts is a story of how the early church began in Jerusalem and spread to the ends of the earth. We noted that at his departure, Jesus promised the believers that they will receive power (1:8). We proceeded to study the arrival of the Spirit of Power and Fire. We noted that the Spirit of Power was poured upon all flesh regardless of age, class, gender or race, enabling all to speak and be heard. We moved on to explore how the early church lived its faith and discovered that it was faithful to the gospel message of liberation and equality for all people. Lastly, we explored the situation of widows in the early church and how it was approached.

In our journey into these stories, we note that widows are among the most affected groups. Reading the story of HIV&AIDS with the story of the early church, we see that the church should model another way of relating—that of equality between races, genders, ages, ethnicity, classes and nations, just as the Spirit was poured upon all flesh. When we promote a gospel that empowers all, we participate in the eradication of the HIV&AIDS horror story from our communities and world.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Now that you finished unit 4, do the assessment activity before you move to unit 5.

1. Briefly write about the history and themes of Acts.
2. The Spirit was “poured upon all flesh”: Explain why social equality is important in the struggle against HIV&AIDS.
3. Write to your church minister and inform her/him about the situation of widows in your community and make suggestions for their empowerment.



FURTHER READING

Chirenda, F. and M. W. Dube. 2003. “Widows and Widowhood,” pp. 196-201. In M. W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Dibeela, M. P. and T.S. Maluleke. 2003. “Poverty and Economic Justice,” pp.220-225. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Imathiu, Grace. 2003. “Reading Between the Lines: Power, Representation and Luke’s Acts,” pp.27-40. In Nyambura Njoroge and M. W. Dube. eds. *Talitha Cum! Theologies of African Women*. Peitermaritzburg: Cluster.

Martin, Clarice, J. 1994. “The Acts of the Apostles,” pp. 728-762. In Schussler Fiorenza, Elizabeth. ed. *Searching the Scriptures Volume 2*. New York: Crossroad.

O’Day, Gail. 1992. “Acts,” pp. 305-312. In Carol A. Newsom and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women’s Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster Press.

Tat-siong Liew, Benny. 2004. “Acts,” pp. 419-428. In Daniel Patte. eds. et al. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

PART IV

READING PAULINE LETTERS IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXTS

OVERVIEW

As we mentioned in unit 1, in the New Testament there are thirteen epistles (letters) that bear Paul's name. In unit 4, we also mentioned that more than half of Acts features Paul's activities, i.e. preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth. Paul is therefore an important person in the history of the early church. Since Paul was travelling most of the time, he kept in touch with his newly founded churches by writing letters to them. For example, he wrote letters to the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Colossi, Thessalonica, Rome and Philipppines. Paul used letter writing to advise the new Christians on all life situations that they faced. When we read Paul's letters we take a journey into the stories of the earliest churches and we get to know their challenges and how they faced them. Hopefully, as we read Paul's letters in the light of the HIV&AIDS horror story we shall weave new stories of healing, hope, compassion, reconciliation and justice.

Paul's letters are often divided into two parts. The first are the authentic Pauline letters and include books such as Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and 1 Thessalonians. The second called Deutro-Pauline letters, also bear Paul's name. However, the latter were written by Paul's students and admirers long after he died. They include: Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians. These letters bear Paul's name but they were not written by him, since they differ in style, language, theology, concerns and the type of church they describe. In part four, we shall focus on studying two authentic Pauline letters, namely Galatians and 1 Corinthians. In part five we shall study one of the Deutro-Pauline letters—1 Timothy.

Whereas the first half of Acts gave us a picture of how the church began in Jerusalem, Paul's letters give us a picture about how the church began in the gentile lands such as Galatia, Corinth, Rome, Philipppines and Thessalonica. Paul's letters also enable us to know some of the problems that confronted the early church.

UNIT 5

GALATIANS AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Hello there and welcome to unit 5. Unit 5 will focus on reading Galatians in the context of the HIV&AIDS story. In unit 5 you shall take an exciting journey into the very first New Testament book to be written: Galatians. We will journey into the history and themes of Galatians. We will focus on the challenges of being one community, that is, one body of Christ. Using Galatians 2:11-14, we will examine how the Galatians overcame the cultural and religious boundaries that divided Jews and gentiles from eating together. Second, we shall explore how the Christian church continued to remain faithful to the gospel of freedom and equality by studying Galatians 3:26-28. In our journey we will ask: What were the horror stories confronting the church of Galatia and how did the church address them? The overall aim of journeying into these stories is to explore how you and your church can weave new stories. Stories in which the church learns to resist HIV&AIDS divisions and stigmatisation, isolation and rejection of PLWHA and the affected.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ✂ Narrate the history and themes of Galatians
- ✂ Describe ways of fighting divisions through justification by faith
- ✂ Promote frameworks of building Christian unity through baptism theology
- ✂ Weave healing stories from Galatians and HIV&AIDS stories

TOPICS

Unit 5: Galatians and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: Brief History of Galatians and Themes in Galatians

- ⌘ Author: Who?
- ⌘ Purpose: Why?
- ⌘ Themes of the Epistle of Galatians: What?
- ⌘ Date: When?

“Eating together” (Galatians 2:11-14)

“One in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28)

Summary, Self-Assessment Activity, Further Reading

Introduction:

Brief History of Galatians and Themes in Galatians

In this section, you will be introduced to the following issues:

- The author of Galatians
- The date of authorship
- The reasons that stimulated the writing of Galatians
- The type of literature and the themes of Galatians

The first seven verses of Galatians will greatly assist us to address most of the issues.

ACTIVITY 1

Read Galatians 1:1-7

Paul an Apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. And all the members of God’s family who are with me. To the churches of Galatia: Grace to you and Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father to whom be the glory for ever and ever, Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel—not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Author: Who?

From the above passage, we can answer the question: *who wrote Galatians*. ‘Paul the apostle’ identifies himself as the author of the letter to the Galatians. In unit 1 you were introduced to various families of New Testament literature. Galatians belongs to the epistles, that is, letters. Do you remember the format of an ancient letter? You can go back to unit 1 and re-read about the epistles under the section entitled, “The New Testament Literary Families”. Yes, ancient epistles begin by identifying the author and the recipient. In the above passage, it is stated that the letter is “To the churches

of Galatia” (v.2). Still following the format of an ancient letter, Paul then greets the churches of Galatia, using both the Greek (grace) and Hebrew (peace) greetings (v.3). Under normal circumstances, greetings are followed by ‘thanksgiving’. However, Paul’s letter to the Galatians is the only one without thanksgiving because Paul was disturbed and angry about what he heard about the Galatians Church. When we begin to explore Paul’s anger, we will be answering the question: “Why was the letter of Galatians written?”

Purpose: *Why?*

Our question here is: *Why did Paul write a letter to the Galatians?* First, as we said above, in this letter Paul did not give any thanksgiving because he was angry with the Galatians. He thus goes straight to the problem that has prompted him to write soon after his greetings. As stated in the above passage, the Galatians were “quickly deserting the one who called them to Christ”. That is, they were deserting Paul and “turning to a different gospel” (v.6). Paul clearly states that “there are some who are confusing” the Galatians by preaching a “different gospel”. Some other preachers had visited the Galatians’ church and preached a gospel that was ‘different’ from the one preached by Paul. The preachers were from Jerusalem. They taught the Galatian’s church that part of being a Christian included keeping the Jewish laws and all the rituals of eating and circumcision. Paul thus writes to strongly discourage the Galatians from adopting what he calls “a different gospel”. He writes to encourage them to stay with the “the gospel of Christ”. As he says in verse 7, “Not that there is *another gospel*, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the *gospel of Christ*”. To underline that the gospel of Christ is the only gospel, in verse 8 he says, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what was proclaimed to you, let that one be cursed”. In verse 9, he repeats this curse to emphasise in no uncertain terms that “there is only one gospel of Christ” and the Galatians believers should not allow themselves to be persuaded by anyone—whether they are from Jerusalem or heaven—to accept a different gospel. Paul’s reason for writing, therefore, will entail dealing with the problem of a “different gospel” and explaining what constitutes the “gospel of Christ”. When we journey with Paul’s letter to the Galatians, we discern the themes of the epistles of Galatians as justification by faith and freedom in Christ.

Themes of the Epistles of Galatians: What?

The main theme of the letter of Galatians is “justification by faith and freedom in Christ”. The phrase ‘justification by faith’ means ‘to get right with God through faith’. In chapters 2-4, Paul discusses the Jewish law and rituals and insists that Christians cannot be justified by keeping the Jewish law. Paul says that, “no one can be justified through the works of the law”. Let us read Galatians 2:15-21 below:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. Yet we know that a person is *justified, not by works of the law* but through faith in Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus so that we might be *justified by faith in Christ*, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law...I do not nullify the *grace of God*; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

For Paul, if Christians are going to try and keep the law they will not only fail, since no one cannot be “justified by works of law”, but even more importantly, “if justification comes through the law then Christ died for nothing”. In other words, Christians cannot make themselves right before God through their actions. Rather, it is through God’s action and through the death of Jesus Christ, that human beings can be justified if they believe in Christ. One is therefore justified through God’s grace. I believe you know what the word grace means? It means God’s undeserved favour; that God’s kindness and love that are given to us unconditionally.

ACTIVITY 2

If we are all justified by God’s grace and not by our good works, explain how this perspective should change our attitude concerning HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination against PLWHA, who are sometimes labelled as sinners or doers of evil? Please write your answer down.

Freedom in Christ is another theme of Galatians that is linked to justification by faith. Freedom means to have the space and the power to live to your full human potential in your family and society in general. It is to live in full human dignity and have your human rights respected. As you saw in Luke 4:16-22, Jesus’ first sermon underlined

that freedom is central to the gospel: The Spirit of the Lord was upon him to preach the good news to the poor and to set the captives free, as well as to declare the year of the Lord. Freedom thus embraces all (Leviticus 25). At the launching of the early church we observed that the same theme was underlined when the spirit was poured upon all flesh and when they were all empowered to speak. We also noted that the early church respected economic freedom by building a community where they held all things in common and no one had any need. Paul's emphasis on freedom is faithfulness to the gospel that Christ preached. Chapters 5-6 emphasise freedom. Let us briefly assess this theme together by doing the following activity.

ACTIVITY 3

Read Galatians 5:1-5 below and answer the questions that follow.

For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. Listen, I Paul, am telling you that if you let yourself be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again, I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut themselves off Christ, you have fallen away from Grace...For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

1. *According to Paul, why should Galatians hold on to freedom?*
2. *According to Paul, what is slavery?*
3. *From the passage, why is Paul so strongly opposed to circumcision?*
4. *What was the meaning of circumcision among Jewish people? Read Genesis 17:9-14.*
5. *According to the above passage, how should Christians use their freedom?*

Read Galatians 5:16-21.

As Paul emphasises above, freedom should be used responsibly. Indeed, in Galatians 5:16-21, he underlines that while Christians are free from the law, they are guided by the Spirit which was poured upon them. The Spirit of God does not lead people to live

immorally; rather, they bear the fruits of the Spirit. Let us read this passage in the activity below and answer the questions that follow.

ACTIVITY 4

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh...but if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealous, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. I am warning you as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (5:16-21).

1. *List the desires of the flesh named in Galatians 5:16-21 that can promote the spread of HIV.*
2. *Read Galatians 5:22-26 and explain how your church embodies the fruits of the Spirit.*

Date: When?

Let us now turn to a new question: *when was the letter to the Galatians written?* It is a question about the date of authorship. Scholarly research holds that Galatians is the earliest letter to be written in the New Testament. Out of the twenty-seven letters of the New Testament, it was the first one to be written. It was written even before the gospels. The letter is usually dated between 47-52 CE. Galatians thus gives insight into the earliest church and its concerns. The above date is preferred because Paul deals with conflicts that characterised the early church before the Jerusalem council dealt with them (Acts 15). The main issue here concerned the Christian identity of gentiles, that is, non-Jews: Should their Christian faith entail keeping all the Jewish laws and rituals or not? This was the main question. Jews had always been people of faith who lived according to Yahweh's law (Exodus 20) and who practiced circumcision as their expression of allegiance to God (Genesis 17: 9-14). They also had laws and rituals of cleanness (Leviticus 11-15) that separated them from other nations. This meant that Jewish people often found it hard to eat with gentiles who did not have the same laws and rituals of cleanness.

ACTIVITY 5

1. *Describe some of the cultural beliefs in your country that may make it difficult for one ethnic group to eat with another.*
 2. *Describe some cultural beliefs in your country that make it difficult for women and men to eat or work together.*
 3. *Explain how your cultural beliefs about illness lead to HIV&AIDS stigma.*
- Write your answers down.*

Since the Jesus movement began and grew among Jewish people, the question of how gentiles should be admitted arose as Gentiles began to join the Christian movement. Jesus, the twelve disciples, Paul, Mary Magdalene, Joseph Jesus' father, Mary the mother of Jesus and James the brother of Jesus, were all Jewish and they kept the law and the rituals of cleanness. The question was therefore critical—should gentiles be subjected to the same Jewish laws and rituals when they became Christians? The early church was divided on this question. Paul believed that Christians were justified by their faith in Christ and that they did not have to keep the Jewish laws and the rituals. Others thought gentiles (non-Jews) should keep the laws and the rituals of cleanness, including circumcision. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul insists that no one can be justified by the law, and that Christians have been set free from the bondage of the law and they should hold jealously to their freedom. Let us revisit passages in Galatians and study them in the light of HIV&AIDS. We shall study Chapter 2:11-14 and 3:26-28.

ACTIVITY 6

Read the following stories and attempt the questions below:

Story 1

They told me that I have AIDS and that I am going to die in 30 days. The health worker just burst in, in front of other patients. They were pointing fingers and telling each other my status. Then I experienced a lot of stigma from my community and from my family. My mother bought me my own dishes and cup. She stopped me from helping to cook and clean the house (UNAIDS & UNDP RSA 1998: 42).

Story 2

HIV positive people are often experience discrimination from their own families. One guy I was seeing in Lenasia was not allowed to touch the telephone. His family would not allow him into the house—he had to stay in the back yard and eat out of enamel plates and mugs (76).

- 1. Identify all the groups that subjected PLWHA to stigma and discrimination in the above stories.*
- 2. In story 1, identify the various forms of stigmatisation that the woman received from various groups.*
- 3. In story 1, the woman's mother bought her separate utensils. Do you think her family will eat with her?*
- 4. In story 2, they bought the man enamel utensils. Explain their reasons.*
- 5. Suggest ways in which some of the above forms of stigma could be avoided through giving correct information.*

ACTIVITY 7

Read Galatians 2:11-14 and answer the questions underneath.

But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to the face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like Gentiles and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- 1. Explain why Peter stopped eating with Gentiles when people from James came.*
- 2. Explain why Paul calls their withdrawal from eating with Gentiles hypocrisy.*
- 3. Name the causes of divisions: are they religious, cultural, ethnic or racially based?*

In this passage we realise that Peter and other Jews became caught in this debate. Sometimes they would eat with Gentiles, according to Paul's teaching, but when those with a 'different gospel' from James came, they would withdraw. This means that although the Spirit was poured upon all flesh, without discrimination, the early church was still learning to accept all people as justified by faith in Christ. Some Jewish Christians were still bound to their Jewish tradition. Luckily, Paul said that it is not acceptable to compromise the gospel of Christ. Christ has been given to all. Paul thus made sure that he stands up to oppose Peter, one of the leading disciples of Christ. He opposed Peter for withdrawing from eating with Gentiles. If Jesus came to set all the captives free and if God poured the Spirit of Power and Fire upon all flesh without discrimination, than why should anyone experience discriminated? If God does not discriminate against us, who among us has the right to practice discrimination?

In the HIV&AIDS era, it is clear that the challenge to the early church applies to us as well. Due to fear and stigma, PLWHA are discriminated against in our churches and communities. Many reasons are often given. For example, some people cite fear of infection for discriminating against PLWHA. Because of this fear, PLWHA in the family and work place may be asked to use separate cups, plates and spoons (as the

above story indicates). They may also be asked to use separate seats and people may not want to use the same toilet with them. Overall, such fear means that people do not want to eat with PLWHA or to even talk to them. Such fear is misguided and misinformed, for HIV cannot be transmitted through sharing utensils, house, office, the telephone or toilet.

ACTIVITY 8

1. *Think of ways in which you can organise your church youth to educate churches and the community against misguided and misinformed fears that lead to HIV&AIDS stigma.*
2. *List other community organisations and government departments that can assist the youth in this project.*

Some people discriminate against PLWHA and their families on the basis of morality. They hold that those who are HIV&AIDS positive have been living immoral sinful lives. This perspective is problematic, for we realised in unit 3 that sin is more than just an individual choice and that Jesus did not judge or reject those who were regarded as sinners, rather he gave them love.

Do you remember what we said about stigma in unit 1? We pointed out that HIV&AIDS stigma is a huge problem since it frustrates both prevention of the epidemic and access to quality care for PLWHA and the affected. In fact, according to Canon Rev. Gideon Byamugisha, a PLWHA Anglican priest:

It is now common knowledge that in HIV&AIDS, it is not the condition itself that hurts most (because many other diseases and conditions lead to serious suffering and death) but the stigma and the possibility of rejection and discrimination, misunderstanding and loss of trust that HIV positive people have to deal with (WCC 2001:3).

How then can the above passage from Paul assist us to break the stigma and live out the good news of abundant grace? First, Paul gives us an example of how to confront discrimination in the church. That is, we must not allow it to happen, but rather we

should speak up and out with and on behalf of the oppressed, in this case PLWHA. So Paul opposed a major apostle, Peter, and told him to his face that he was compromising the gospel of Christ. We each have a responsibility to stand up and oppose *different gospels* when they encroach on the church and community. Second, Paul gives us a theological reason for having no tolerance for stigma: namely, none of us can be justified through our own works. None of us can boast of any higher holiness or self-righteousness. We are all justified by God's grace—the undeserved favour. In short, if you ever hear a church leader or member saying PLWHA are sinners or immoral, you should be courageous enough to say: “We have all sinned and come short of the Glory of God. We are only justified by God's grace”. Grace should, therefore be what we give to each other, since God gives us grace—that is undeserved favour (John 8:1-11).

“One in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26-28)

The book of Galatians is celebrated for its themes of justification by faith and freedom in Christ. As we saw earlier, this theme is faithful to what Jesus (Luke 4:16-22) and the early church (Acts 2:1-21) taught. One of the verses that capture this theme is Galatians 3:26-28, which is celebrated for the gospel message of unity and equality through the gospel of Christ. It reads as follows:

For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. *As many as were baptised into Christ, you have clothed themselves with Christ.* There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of *you are one in Christ Jesus.* And if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Paul cites baptism into Christ as the ritual that brings all Christians to be “clothed with Christ”. *Wearing Christ* means thinking his thoughts, living according to his teaching and doing his deeds. Since the gospels showed us what Christ taught and how he related with people, especially the marginalised, it was a practical gospel. *Wearing Christ* means living fully according to his teaching and deeds. Paul explains that when we wear/clothe ourselves with Christ through baptism, the social boundaries that divide us fall apart. The main social boundary discussed in Galatians

is that of ethnic identity, that is, the Jews and Gentiles' relationship. In the above passage, Paul mentions other social boundaries that must also fall away: these include class and gender boundaries. He asserts that we are wearing Christ through faith and baptism, "There is no longer Jew or Greek [ethnic and racial boundary], there is no longer slave or free [class boundary], there is no longer male or female [gender boundary]; for all of *you are one in Christ Jesus*". Please note that this unity is not only spiritual or waiting to happen in heaven. Rather, according to Paul, the boundaries between ethnic groups (Jew or Greek); gender (male or female); class (slave or free) must disappear here and now, for we are all children of God through faith. Those groups that have previously been divided according to ethnicity, gender and race should become "one in Christ Jesus". They should start to eat and live together as equals, who are one in the body of Christ. Indeed, you will remember from our study of Acts (unit 4) that this was the practice of the early church (Acts 4:43-47).

ACTIVITY 9

1. *Using the above verse, write a proposal to your church leader making suggestions on how the church can pioneer breaking all social boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender and class in your community.*
2. *Make a list of all other community organisations and governmental departments that can assist you in this project.*

Why is this verse an essential teaching for our struggle against HIV&AIDS? Remember that we said that HIV&AIDS is an epidemic within other social epidemics. In particular, we pointed out that eradicating other social inequalities is an essential part of healing ourselves and eradicating the epidemic. HIV&AIDS research underlines that "the starting point for an adequate response is the understanding that any bid to halt the AIDS epidemic has to include determined efforts to eradicate poverty and drastically reduce inequalities" (UNDP Botswana, 2000:56). Galatians 3:28 is an essential healing story, for it insists on a society which has no tolerance for inequalities and discriminations.

SUMMARY

In unit 5 we studied the first New Testament book to be written: Galatians. We looked at its history and themes. We realised that Galatians was a letter written by Paul, between 47-52 CE. The church there was turning to a different gospel. Paul wrote to underline that they should not accept another gospel, for there is only one gospel of Christ. We found that the main themes of the letter are justification by faith and freedom in Christ. We realised that Paul means that no one can be justified through good works or by following the law. Rather, we are all justified by God's grace through Christ. Nonetheless, freedom in Christ is guided by the Spirit that bears fruit through our works of faith.

Afterwards we focused on the challenges of being a community, that is, living as one body of Christ. Using Galatians 2:11-14, we journeyed into the story of how Paul confronted the divisions between Jews and Gentiles. His approach insisted on justification by faith and freedom in Christ. Galatians had to overcome the cultural and religious boundaries that prevented Jews and Gentiles from eating together. Second, we explored how the Christian church continued to remain faithful in the gospel of freedom and equality by studying Galatians 3:26-28. In our study of Galatians we were asking: What were the horror stories confronting the churches of Galatia and how were they addressed? The main problem was the challenge of living together as a united community. The overall aim for studying these stories was to explore how we can weave new stories in which the community is united to resist HIV&AIDS divisions that express themselves through stigmatisation and discrimination. We concluded by saying Paul's approach gives us a map for eradicating divisions caused by stigmatisation, ethnicity, age, gender and class. We also realised that Paul sought to emphasise to Christians that they should use their freedom responsibly, living according to the fruits of the Spirit rather than according to desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-26).

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Now that you have finished studying Galatians, please take the following self-assessment activity before you proceed to unit 6.

1. Give reasons why Galatians is regarded as an epistle.
2. What were the main problems faced by the church of Galatians.
3. Discuss the main themes of the letter to the Galatians.
4. Discuss how the book of Galatians can help us weave stories of healing and compassion in the struggle against HIV&AIDS.
5. Using the book of Galatians, design a project on eliminating HIV&AIDS stigma in your neighbourhood.

Please write your responses.



FURTHER READING

Briggs, Sheila. 1994. "Galatians," pp. 218-236. In Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. ed. *Searching the Scriptures Volume 2*. New York: Crossroads.

Chitando, E. 2003. "Persons Living With HIV/AIDS," pp.207-209. In M. W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Maluleke, T. S. 2003. "Reconciliation," pp.141-144. In In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Mosupole, A. and Dibeela, C. 2003. "Race and Ethnic Based Discrimination," pp. 242-247. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Miguez, Nestor Oscar. 2004. "Galatians," pp. 463-472. In Daniel Patte. ed. etl. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Osiek, Carolyn. 1992. "Galatians," pp. 333-337. In Carol Newsom and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.



ASSIGNMENT: UNIT 1-5

Before you proceed, please take the assignment below. Write all your answers in your notebook. If you cannot answer some of the topics, please feel free to return to the relevant units and re-read.

1. Explain why the gospels are regarded as the good news of Jesus Christ.
2. Describe four different ways of reading the New Testament and show how they can help us to read for healing, compassion and justice in the HIV&AIDS context.
3. Explain the function of the journey and story metaphors in this module.
4. Describe HIV&AIDS stigma and discuss a New Testament passage that can help us to break the stigma.
5. Discuss how social injustice promotes the spread of HIV&AIDS and discuss a New Testament passage that helps us to become justice-loving faith communities.
6. Stigmatisation includes labelling PLWHA as sinners. Discuss a New Testament passage/s that helps us to have a wide understanding of sin and Jesus' approach to sinners.
7. The book of Acts gives us a picture of how the early church started. Discuss how they held to the message of liberation. Explain how the widows were served in the early church.
8. Galatians is the earliest letter to be written in the New Testament. Explain how its message of unity and equality (Galatians 3:26-28) can assist us to eradicate HIV&AIDS stigma in our communities.
9. Discuss perspectives from your culture that can assist us to eradicate HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination.
10. Explain why this module uses the term HIV&AIDS instead of the common HIV/AIDS.

UNIT 6

READING 1 CORINTHIANS AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Welcome to unit 6! In unit 5, we examined the first epistle of Paul—Galatians—and saw how the early church struggled to live as a united body of Christ regardless of race, gender, class and religion. We examined how these stories can assist us to confront and defeat the HIV&AIDS epidemic, especially its accompanying epidemic of stigma and discrimination.

In unit 6, we continue with our journey into Paul’s letters and the life and struggles of the early church by focusing on the letter of 1 Corinthians. We shall take a short journey into the history and themes of 1 Corinthians. Then we will focus on studying Chapter 7 and 15. Chapter 7 deals with sexual relationships for single, married, widowed and mixed couples. Chapter 15 focuses on resurrection of the body. I hope that both passages will help us to understand our bodies in the HIV&AIDS era and to find ways to speak about sexuality, as well as to weave new stories of life and hope through the resurrection story of Christ.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- ⌘ Explain the history of 1 Corinthians and its themes
- ⌘ Discuss the sexual ethics of the early church
- ⌘ Develop a language of discussing sexuality in the church
- ⌘ Develop usable stories of hope for life through the resurrection narrative

TOPICS

Unit 6: Reading 1 Corinthians and the HIV& AIDS Story

Introduction: A Brief History of 1 Corinthians and Themes in 1 Corinthians

- ⌘ Author and Date: Who and When?
- ⌘ Purpose and Themes: Why and What?

Sexuality and Freedom (1 Corinthians 7)

- ⌘ The Challenge of Sexuality in the HIV&AIDS Era
- ⌘ Sexuality Discussed in 1 Corinthians 7

Reading 1 Corinthians 7 with the HIV& AIDS Story

Resurrection and Hope for Life (1 Corinthians 15)

- ⌘ Defining the Problem of Resurrection in Corinth
- ⌘ Resurrection Power and the HIV&AIDS Plague of Hopelessness

Summary, Self-Assessment, Further Reading

Introduction:

A Brief History of 1 Corinthians and Themes in 1 Corinthians

In this section you will be introduced to the following issues: the author of 1 Corinthians, the date of authorship, type of literature, the reasons that stimulated the writing of 1 Corinthians, and then the themes of the letter. In fact, the opening verses of 1 Corinthians will greatly assist us to make this journey of discovery.

ACTIVITY 1

Read the verses of 1 Corinthians (1:1-13) and answer the questions below:

1. **Paul**, called to be an apostle of Christ by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes.
2. **To the church of God that is in Corinth**, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus...
3. **Grace to you and Peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. **I give thanks** to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus.

5. *Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and **that there be no divisions among you**, but that you be united in the same mind and same purpose;*
 6. *For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you;*
 7. *What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul" or "I belong to Apollos" or "I belong to Cephas" or "I belong to Christ";*
 8. *Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptised in the name of Paul?*
-
1. *Using the above passage, list all the features that make 1 Corinthians qualify as an ancient letter.*
 2. *From the passage, explain the problems that led to the writing of 1 Corinthians?*

Author and Date: Who and When?

Who wrote 1 Corinthians? From the above passage, you can identify the author. The epistle begins, according to the ancient format of letter writing, by identifying the author—1 Corinthians was written by Paul, who identifies himself in verse 1 as “an apostle of Christ”. In the same verse it also becomes clear that the letter was co-authored with “Brother Sosthenes”. In verse 2, the “Church of God in Corinth” is identified as the recipient of the letter. This is followed by a greeting (grace and peace) and thanksgiving in verse 4.

But **when was 1 Corinthians written?** Scholarly research estimates that 1 Corinthians was written around 54 CE. Corinth was a commercial city of great cultural diversity, religions, philosophy and sexual immorality. It had many temples, that were reputed to practice temple prostitution and almost all meat was offered to divinities. In fact, Corinth had such a bad reputation that to “Corinthisise” became a term used to describe sexual immorality.

Purpose and Themes: Why and What?

It is important to ask: “**Why was 1 Corinthians written?**” From the above passage, you have already gleaned the reasons that prompted Paul to write 1 Corinthians. Like the Galatians letter, 1 Corinthians will enable you to experience the stories and struggles of the early church based in Corinth. Paul wrote to assist the new Christians to understand their faith and lives as believers. As the above passage states, it seems Paul wrote because of the reports he received from “Chloe’s people”. They had reported that there were divisions in the church. Unlike in the Galatians’ church, where divisions were primarily Jewish-Gentile (cultural/religious) differences, in 1 Corinthians the divisions were caused by misunderstanding of Christian faith. Some thought that they needed to identify with their favourite preacher and they ranked Jesus among them. As the above passage tells you, some said: I belong to Paul, while others cited Cephas, Appollos and Christ. Second, it seems the church had also written a letter to Paul asking questions, for in Chapter 7:1 Paul begins by saying, “concerning the matters about which you wrote”. 1 Corinthians was thus written in response to the reports from Chloe’s people and a letter Paul received from the Corinthian church.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Are there any divisions in your family, church and community?*
2. *What are the sayings and proverbs in your culture that fight divisions?*
3. *List the divisions in your church and make suggestions for addressing them.*

When you read the whole letter of 1 Corinthians, you will find that there were a number of problems facing the new Christians there. Their problems were linked to misunderstanding their new Christian faith. For example, they did not understand how to use their freedom in Christ and some did not know how to use their spiritual gifts or even how to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Their problems were also linked to the religious and sexual immorality of the city. Some of the problems confronting the new Christians, addressed in the letter, are as follows:

1. Divisions in the church (Chapter 1)
2. Incest (Chapter 5)—A man had taken his father’s wife for himself

3. Lawsuits (Chapter 6:1-11)—Some Christians were suing each other in public courts. Paul advises that they should settle their disputes internally
4. The abuse of freedom and claims of knowledge (Chapter 6:12-20; 8, 9 and 10). Paul emphasises that members should not use freedom to hurt others
5. Marriage questions (Chapter 7) which we shall study closely below
6. The covering of the heads of women in worship (Chapter 11:1-16). Here Paul says, “Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head” (v.5)
7. Discriminations of the poor during the Lord’s supper (11:17-34)
8. Correct use of spiritual gifts (Chapter 12-14)
9. Correct understanding of resurrection (Chapter 15)

ACTIVITY 3

1. *List some of the problems confronting your church.*
2. *Write a letter to your church describing the problems and suggest solutions.*

Since Paul was answering various problems confronting the young Christians, there is no one consistent theme in 1 Corinthians, but rather a number of issues, as tabulated above. However, when you read Paul’s response, you can still see that Paul’s response was informed by the understanding of the gospel of Christ that justifies, frees and unites us through faith. In this unit you will study two issues: issues of sexuality and resurrection and how they can assist us to confront the horror story of HIV&AIDS.

Sexuality and Freedom (1 Corinthians 7)
The Challenge of Sexuality in the HIV&AIDS Era

Please read the story in activity 4 and answer the questions below.

ACTIVITY 4

Once upon a time, an HIV&AIDS activist travelled to meet with church leaders in a far away country. As part of introducing himself and the subject he said, "Let those who are married raise their hands". And all the church leaders raised their hands. Then he said, "Let all those who have children raise their hands". And they all raised their hands. Then he said, "Let me see the hands of those who have sex". And no one raised his hand.

Questions

- 1. Describe how you responded to the last activity and state your reasons.*
- 2. Explain why the church leaders did not respond to the last question.*

Sexuality is central to the horror story of HIV&AIDS. First, HIV&AIDS is also a STD (sexually transmitted disease). I am sure you know that HIV can be transmitted through other means such as blood transfusion, exchanging un-sterilized injections, mother's infected milk/blood or attending to the wounds of an infected person with a broken skin and without protective gloves. Nonetheless, most people are infected through unprotected sexual activity with infected partners. Second, the church and many cultures do not have a language to speak about human sexuality openly. As Agrippa Khathide points out:

As HIV&AIDS is largely a human sexuality issue, it is urgent to look into our attitude towards sex. Unless this changes, our fight against HIV&AIDS will become increasingly difficult. We often find that when we talk about sex in public we are faced with comments like, 'don't talk about sex, we are Christians' or 'don't talk about sex, we are Africans'. If we are serious about fighting the epidemic, we need to tackle this conspiracy of silence firmly and resolutely. The church, as a body that claims to be the conscience of humanity

and the custodian of moral values, needs to lead in campaign to break the conspiracy of silence (2003:1).

Consequently, in his book, *How Can Religious Institutions Talk about Sexual Matters in Their Communities*, Canon Gideon Byamugisha says,

Let us acknowledge that there is much more sexual activity happening in our families and communities than we are often prepared to accept. Let us also acknowledge that much of this sex is unsafe (leading to HIV&AIDS, STDs, unwanted pregnancies and post-pregnancy complications) much as it may be unlawful or unacceptable to some of us (2000:7).

ACTIVITY 5

1. *List some sayings, proverbs and expressions used in your culture to talk about human sexuality.*
2. *List ways in which your culture discourages open discussions about sex.*
3. *Explain how the views of your culture hinder the efforts on HIV&AIDS prevention. Write your answer down.*

Sexuality Discussed in 1 Corinthians 7

Let us now turn to 1 Corinthians to check out their stories and challenges on human sexuality. How then did the first Corinthian church handle issues of sexuality? You will note that Chapter 7, which deals with this subject, opens by saying: “Now concerning the matters about which you wrote” (v. 1), suggesting that they asked Paul a number of matters.

I suggest that we read the whole chapter together using three questions:

- What are the problems identified?
- What were Paul’s suggestions?
- How can they help us deal with sexuality in the HIV&AIDS era?

Let us view the first two questions graphically below:

Chapter 7	Problem/Issue/group	Paul's Suggested Solution
V. 1	Abstinence: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman" (A Corinthian statement).	Because of sexual immorality, each man must have his wife and each woman her own husband.
V 3-4	Conjugal rights for married couples	The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, likewise the wife to her husband...do not deprive one another except by agreement for a set time to devote to prayer, then come together.
V. 8	Single people and widows	1. It is well for them to remain unmarried 2. But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry.
Verse 10	To the married I give this command	The wife should not separate from her husband and the husband should not divorce his wife (but if they separate let them remain unmarried or reconcile).
V 12	Mixed Couples (Christian and non-Christians)	If any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.
V. 15	The unbelieving partner's decision	But if the unbelieving partner chooses to separate, let it be so. In such a case the brother or sister is not bound. It is to peace that God has called you.
V. 25	Virgins	It is well for you to remain as you are. If you marry you do not sin... Yet those who marry will experience distress in this life.
V. 39	Widows	A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if he dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes. But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is.

Reading 1 Corinthians 7 with the HIV&AIDS Story

Let us now turn to the third question: How can chapter 7 help us deal with sexuality in the age of HIV&AIDS? How can we read chapter 7 in the light of the HIV&AIDS story? For the first point (in verse 8), apparently the Corinthians had suggested that, "it is better for a man not to touch a woman". In the HIV&AIDS era this would pass as the recommended rule of *Abstinence from sexual relations*. Paul accepts their view with a qualification. He points out that given the immorality, it is better for each

woman and each man to have his/her own partner to avoid falling into sexual temptations. In the HIV&AIDS context, this recommendation remains quite essential, for many studies indicate that those who take virginity promises often fail to keep the abstinence promise. And, worse, when they finally get sexually involved they are often unprepared for safer sex and end up making themselves more vulnerable to infection. Paul thus suggests marriage and faithfulness is much better: namely, that ‘each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband’ (v.2). Indeed, in the HIV&AIDS prevention strategy, *Be faithful to your partner* is also a key approach.

I believe you know that in the HIV&AIDS horror story, even marriage is not a sanctuary. Some virgins are infected on the first day of marriage by their infected partners. Research documentation on the epidemic indicates that married women are in fact even more vulnerable to the infection. According to UNAIDS, 80 per cent of infected women in stable relationships have been infected by their spouses (2000:22). How would Paul’s recommendation make marriage a safer approach to HIV&AIDS prevention? I think to answer this question, we should ask: what makes married women more vulnerable to HIV&AIDS? It is largely because most cultures, laws and religions dis-empower and define women as subordinates to their husbands. Consequently, women often do not have decision-making powers; they do not have property of their own and they do not have control over their bodies. The majority of marriages are under a patriarchal (male-centred) cultural arrangement, which makes women dependants. Such marriages reduce women’s humanity so that they exist only for the sexual interest of their partners. Such marriages leave women without power to insist on safer sex and often even without power to insist on faithfulness from their spouses, since they fear being deserted by their material providers, and in other cases, they fear violence.

ACTIVITY 6

1. *Describe the distribution of power between husbands and wives in your country.*
2. *State and explain the empowering cultural perspectives of your country that can assist us in HIV&AIDS prevention and those that hinder the same efforts.*

If you carefully examine Paul's approach to male-female relationships in the above graph, you will realise that it is firmly within the framework of one in Christ. That is, insofar as we have been baptised in Christ, we are all wearing Christ. There is no longer man and woman, there is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free (Galatians 3:28). Paul uses this framework to address sexual relations between wives and husbands. Consequently, if you study how he addresses the above issues and problems, you will realise that his suggested solutions give equal power to men and women in relationships. Husband and wives are presented as equals in marriage. It is only such a Christian marriage that can assist to make the strategy of 'be faithful' work in the struggle against HIV&AIDS. Otherwise marriages that define women as powerless dependants and subordinates are unhelpful in HIV&AIDS prevention, in fact, they are a major part of the problem. As UNAIDS research and documentations points out: "*Gender inequalities are a major driving force behind the AIDS epidemic. The different attributes and roles societies assign to males and females profoundly affect their ability to protect themselves against HIV[&]AIDS and cope with its impact*" (2000: 21).

ACTIVITY 7

1. *Do you think your church promotes equality between wives and husbands? Give reasons for your answer.*

While Paul recommends marriage, he is also open to single life. In fact, he prefers single life and strongly recommends it (vv. 8 & 25-29) as long as people are able to control their sexual passions. If they are unable to subdue their sexual passions, then he recommends marriage, v. 8. Paul gives two reasons for preferring single life over married life: First, "Those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you that" (v.28). Second, because the unmarried people are free to give "unhindered devotion to the Lord" (v.35). The first reason indicates that Paul was aware that patriarchal marriage was oppressive and he had made efforts to redefine its power relations according to the good news of Christ Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that was indiscriminately poured upon all flesh.

Another group that Paul addresses is that of widows. In the HIV&AIDS horror story, widows have found themselves at the centre of the storm from various angles. In some cultures, they are expected to be re-marry within the family. The latter is an ancient patriarchal approach to keeping property within the family of the men/husbands and keeping women as subordinates dependants on men. However, in the HIV&AIDS era, the widow could be infected and pass the virus to her new husband. Or the new husband could be HIV+ and pass the virus to the widow. In cases where remarriage is not required or abandoned, widows tend to be accused by in-laws of witchcraft, dispossessed and left desperate to survive. Some are forced to resort to sex work, a trade that encourages the spread of HIV&AIDS. In some cultures, they are subjected to severe rituals of cleansing that, once more, expose them to HIV&AIDS infection.

How can Paul's suggested solutions assist widows in the HIV&AIDS era? According to Paul, a widow has two options:

1. She is free to marry, which suggests a choice on her side. That is, she can decide to marry if she wishes and this suggests she is free to choose a partner.
2. Paul recommends that a widow should be free to choose to remain single. In fact, he underlines that "She is more blessed if she remains as she is" (v. 40).

Both of these options would help to protect widows in HIV&AIDS contexts.

ACTIVITY 8

1. *Write two short stories describing widows you know and how they are surviving.*
2. *Write to your pastor and make suggestions about helping widows in your community using Paul's perspective.*
3. *List community and government organisations that can assist you in this project.*

Resurrection and Hope for Life, (1 Corinthians 15)

Defining the Problem of Resurrection in Corinth

Christian belief in resurrection is based on the resurrection of Christ. It seems the Corinthian church, which was made up of gentiles and Jews, had some difficulty with the idea of the resurrection of the body. Some of them might even have said, “There is no resurrection of the body” (v. 12). Some were asking, “How are the dead raised” (v. 35). The Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, while some section of Jews believed in the resurrection of the physical body. Paul thus writes elaborately to explain the Christian concept of resurrection. He uses a number of symbols such as a planted seed that must die in order to germinate with a new body (vv.35-38). Paul holds that, “What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory...it is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body” (v. 44). He also points out that while death came through one man, Adam, resurrection comes through Jesus (vv. 21-22).

ACTIVITY 9

1. *Write one traditional or folklore story of resurrection from your culture.*
2. *What kind of body is assumed by the resurrected person in your cultural stories?*
3. *How can these cultural stories help us deal with the impact of AIDS death and hopelessness today?*

Paul underlines that the resurrection of Christ is of prime importance since it assures Christians that they will also be raised. As he points out, “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain” (vv. 13-14). He continues, “Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died” and as an assurance that “we will not all die, but we will all be changed” (v. 51).

ACTIVITY 10

How many people have died of AIDS in your family, church, country and continent?

Resurrection Power and the HIV&AIDS Plague of Hopelessness

I am sure you will agree that in the HIV&ADS context the suffering and death of millions devastates both PLWHA and the affected communities. For example:

- The affected that care for and lose their loved ones increasingly lose faith in the meaning of life
- To PLWHA who endure rejection, isolation, stigmatisation and unbearable suffering, life can become a living endless horror story
- Young children live in fear of losing their parents and parents live in fear of losing their children
- PLWHA without access to affordable ARVs, fear their pending end while uninfected sexually active people, who are negative, worry about how long they will be able to remain negative
- Parents with adult children worry about their children getting infected
- Couples, about to marry, worry about getting tested while those who are married, agonise about the faithfulness of their partners
- Couples who want to conceive, agonise about their HIV status and once they have a child (regardless of status) they agonise about whether they will live long enough to raise the child to adulthood

Losing security inevitable for both PLWHA and the affected communities. Hopelessness becomes a plague that eats away at the hearts and minds of individuals and communities, as the reckless death-dealing force of HIV&AIDS seems destined to win. The problem of hopelessness thus sometimes rises and becomes bigger than the threat of the HIV, viciously eating away at one's immunity through anxiety and stress. Indeed, communities that live in the HIV&AIDS zones are more like Ezekiel's valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-11) crying, "Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost. We are cut off completely" from the circle of life.

ACTIVITY 11

If you live in a country devastated by HIV&AIDS, organise a church trip to your nearest graveyard.

- 1. List the number of young reproductive (18-40 years) people who have died from your community in the last year.*
- 2. List the number of elderly people who died last year (60 to 80 years).*
- 3. Give reasons for the huge differences.*

Do you think the resurrection story of Christ can help our communities from the devastation of HIV&AIDS death? I believe that the resurrection story, as expounded by Paul in 1 Corinthians, has the potential to reweave the strands of hope into the veins of our lives. Putting the HIV&AIDS horror story within the framework of the resurrection power allows us to detonate the deadly bomb of hopelessness. Through the story of resurrection we can say, “Death where is your sting? Where is your power?” Through the resurrection story we can be able to say that *death does not have the last word*. Rather, the power of resurrection that is in us through Christ reminds us that we will ultimately win the fight for life. We will win the struggle of HIV&AIDS. It is for Christians to inspire our devastated communities and families to regain the power of living against the threat of hopelessness. You, my dear learner, are a very important part of reweaving hope back into the veins of our communities. Like Ezekiel, you are sent to go down the valley of dry bones and preach hope to them until they rise, breathe and live.

SUMMARY

In unit 6, we continued with our journey into Paul’s letters and the life and struggles of the early church by focusing on the letter of 1 Corinthians. We briefly examined its history and themes. We realised that 1 Corinthians was written in response to reports from Chloe’s people and a letter sent to Paul by the church. Paul thus wrote to address various issues and problems faced by the new Corinthian Christians. The rest of the unit then focused on studying Chapter 7 and 15. Chapter 7 dealt with sexual relationships for single, married, widowed and mixed couples. We found that Paul treated men and women equally. Although he recommended marriage, he preferred

single life if people could control their sexual passions. Chapter 15 focused on resurrection of the body. We realised that the Corinthian church had several questions concerning resurrection. We then likened the situation of the HIV&AIDS epidemic with a plague of death that plants hopelessness in individuals and communities. Through the framework of resurrection, we realised that we can neutralise the reigning power of death by emphasising the inevitable victory of life through the resurrection story of Jesus as the first fruit of hope.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Please, respond to all the following questions and write your answers down before you journey to unit 7.

1. List some of the problems faced by the new Corinthian church.
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and discuss how its story can help us to break HIV&AIDS stigma.
3. Write a one month preaching plan based on 1 Corinthians 7 that helps to break the silence surrounding sexuality of single, married, widows and mixed couples.
4. If you have *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV&AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC, 2003, turn to page 70-75 and prepare two sermons and/or Bible studies on the resurrection story as a story of hope for life.



FURTHER READING

Bassler, Jouette M. 1992. "1 Corinthians," pp. 321-329. In Carol, Newsom and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Byamugisha, G. and E. Chitando. 2003. "Resurrection/Restoration," pp. 70-75. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Chitando, E. and T. S. Maluleke and G. Byamugisha. 2003. "Sexuality," pp. 133-140. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Khathide, Agrippa, G. 2003. "Teaching and Talking About Sexuality: A Means of Combating HIV/AIDS," pp.1-9. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *HIV&AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programmes*. Geneva: WCC.

Maluleke, T.S., E. Chitando and I. Phiri. 2003. "Hope," pp.103-111. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Pathrapankal, Joseph. 2004. "1 Corinthians," pp. 444-450. In Daniel Patte ed. etl. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

PART V

READING PASTORAL AND CATHOLIC LETTERS IN THE HIV&AIDS ERA

Part 5 will focus on pastoral and catholic letters. The title *pastoral letters* is used to refer to three letters: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. These were believed to be written from one pastor to another—from Paul to Timothy and Paul to Titus—concerning issues of church administration. The Pastorals are quite similar in themes and concerns. Although they bear Paul’s name, scholarly research has concluded that they were either written by a student of Paul, or someone who deliberately used Paul’s name for reasons of his authority. The Pastoral church is too structurally developed to be the church of Paul’s time. Further, the theology, different teachings (heresy), and the style and language are significantly different from those of Paul.

The name catholic, meaning universal or general is often used to designate a group of four letters. These include: James, 1 and 2 Peter and Jude. These letters were not written to a particular church confronting particular problems. Rather, the letters were composed to be read by the general church.

Both the pastoral and catholic letters reflect a church of the late first century in its contents and concerns. In part 5, we shall only look at two of these in the context of HIV&AIDS: 1 Timothy, representing the pastoral letters, and James, for the catholic letters.

UNIT 7

READING 1 TIMOTHY AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Welcome to unit 7! Please find your comfortable chair and get yourself a fresh glass of water. If you have just come back from work, take six deep breathings so that you are completely comfortable. Now you can put on your hiking shoes for we are about to travel to the rather strange and harsh story world of 1 Timothy. We will briefly explore its historical background and themes. Then we will focus on three selected passages: 1 Timothy 2:1-11; 3:1-5 and 5:9-16. The first passage will enable us to study men and women's relationships towards the end of the first century, that is, in the later early church. Chapter 3 shall enable us to study how leadership became organised as the church grew. Chapter 5, focusing on widows, will highlight for us how the changing story of the growing early church affected women's activity and status towards the end of the first century

You will find that 1 Timothy is quite different territory, for its contents drastically differ from Jesus' gospel message of setting the captives free. It also differs from the message of Acts where the Spirit of Power was poured upon all flesh, enabling all to speak and be heard and it differs greatly from Paul's message in Galatians and Corinthians where all became one in Christ and where Paul encouraged many to remain single. You will find 1 Timothy the opposite of everything we learnt so far. How so? Let us make this journey to 1 Timothy to discover this story world.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ⌘ Describe the historical background and themes of 1 Timothy
- ⌘ Explain how the relationships of men and women were redefined in the later church of the 2nd century
- ⌘ Explore the model of leadership adopted by the later early church
- ⌘ Analyse the impact of the change on women's role in church
- ⌘ Analyse the implications of 1 Timothy for the HIV&AIDS struggle
- ⌘ Re-read 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS prevention and care.

TOPICS

Unit 7: Reading 1 Timothy and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: Brief History and Themes of 1 Timothy

- ⌘ Author Who?
- ⌘ Purpose: Why?

“I Permit no Woman to Have Authority over a Man” (1 Timothy 2:1-11)

“Young Widows Marry, Bear children” (1 Timothy 5:9-15)

Managing the Church as a Household (1 Timothy 3:1-5)

Reading 1 Timothy with the HIV&AIDS Story

Re-reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS Prevention and Care

Summary, Self-Assessment, Further Reading

Introduction: Brief History and Themes of 1 Timothy

Biblical research estimates that 1 Timothy was most probably written early in the second century. Some date it around 125 CE. This date is largely based on the contents of the letter, which reflects a much more structurally organised church with Bishops, elders, deacons and nuns (referred to as widows). The letter addresses *heresies*—or teachings that were not accepted by the church. Similarly, the theology of 1 Timothy also indicates a huge change from the gospels, Acts and the earliest teaching in Paul's letters. 1 Timothy, together with 2 Timothy and Titus are often referred to as *Pastoral letters* because their contents indicate a focus on leadership offices of the church. According to the Harper Collins Study Bible introduction, the pastoral letters,

Purport to be from Paul, but several of their features seem incompatible with that claim. The vocabulary and style differ in many ways from those of the rest of Pauline letters. Key Pauline concepts such as faith, law and righteousness are treated quite differently, while a new emphasis on godliness, sound teaching, church order, and good works appears. The historical situations that the Pastorals describe cannot be accommodated to what we know of Paul's career from Acts and other Letters (1998:2229).

As you can gather from the above quote, Pastoral letters are significantly different from Paul's letters. Let us assess some of these issues for ourselves by reading the opening verses of I Timothy.

ACTIVITY 1

Read 1 Timothy 1:1-7 and answer the questions below.

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our savior and of Christ Jesus our hope. 2. To Timothy, my loyal child in faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. 3. I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may **instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine**, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculation rather than divine training that is known by faith...some people have deviated...and turned to meaningless talk...Now we know that the law is good (1 Timothy 3:1-3).*

1. *Identify a new word added to Paul's normal way of greeting (See unit 5 and 6).*
2. *Who is Timothy?*
3. *Describe the problem that led to the writing of 1 Timothy.*
4. *Outline perspectives that are strikingly different from Paul's teaching (See unit 5 and 6).*

As you can see from the above, the letter identifies Paul as the author. But for reasons that we stated above, Paul could not have been the author. You may find this surprising, yet in the ancient times it was an acceptable and ethical practice to write a letter or book in the name of someone else. It was a common practice for a student to write under the name of a dead teacher. The practice also took place when new writers wanted to use the authority of an influential person to make their ideas more persuasive. In this case, the writers were either using Paul's influence in the early church or they actually believed themselves to be expanding his ideas. Given the major differences, it is better to view the author of 1 Timothy as someone who sought to use Paul's authority to put across his own ideas. Apart from the Pastoral letters, other New Testament books that bear Paul's name but were not written by Paul, are Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians.

But what do we know about Timothy from Paul's letters? From the undisputed letters of Paul, one learns that Timothy was one of Paul's fellow workers (1 Thessalonians

1:1; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Romans 16:21; Philippians 1:1; Philemon 1). He served as Paul's agent on some occasions (1 Thessalonians 3:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philemon 2:19); he is named as co-author of several of the letters (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; Philemon 1:1; Philemon 1) (Soards 1987:157). The 1 Timothy letter is addressed to Timothy—identified as Paul's loyal child in faith. Scholarly research holds that the letter was not really written to Timothy who used to travel with Paul, but to the second century church in general.

Purpose: *Why?*

Let us now turn our journey towards purpose and examine the reasons that led to the writing of 1 Timothy. Our question here is: *Why was 1 Timothy written?* In the above passage you will find some of the concerns that led to the writing of 1 Timothy. Some teachers in the church were teaching heretical doctrine. These teachers had had some success since they had led others to deviate from the acceptable teaching. According to 1 Timothy, the heretical teachers:

- Taught a *different doctrine* or a teaching that differed from the accepted one
- Occupied themselves “with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculation rather than divine training that is known by faith...” (1:4)
- Forbade marriage (4:3)
- Made restrictions on food (4:3)
- Claimed knowledge (6:20-21)

Although it is hard to define the kind of heresy that was troubling the church from these descriptions, most scholars have concluded that it must have been some form of Gnosticism—a movement that associated salvation with some form of knowledge and which became popular in the second century. It seems the teaching of Gnosticism had found its way into the church of 1 Timothy.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Write down some of the wrong teachings about HIV&AIDS that you have heard in your country.*
2. *Explain why it is important to oppose these wrong teachings.*

The 1 Timothy author writes to control the heresy in the church. Accordingly, he says to Timothy, “I urge you to remain in Ephesus so that you may *instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine* (v.3). The solution that the author adopted was that of a structured church, where teaching and prophecy are restricted to the ordained ministers (4:14). Part of being a qualified teacher or leader entailed being a married man (1 Timothy 3:1-7). The author’s suggests as a solution, abandoning the gospel of freedom and justice and embracing the cultural structures of the Roman Empire as a model for the church. In the Roman Empire, the household was regarded as the smallest political unit. Within the family, there was the father who was a husband and leader over his wife; father over his children and slave master over his slaves. The Roman household was arranged along relationships of inequalities. These positions were taught by Greek philosophers ages ago as Elizabeth E. Johnson points out:

As long ago as the fourth century B.C.E., philosophers considered the household as a microcosm, the basic social unit whose structure ought to reflect the pyramidal structure of the whole society and even the universe. Aristotle said, “The smallest and primary parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children”. By the first century, many ethicists, both Greco-Roman and Jewish, discussed this structure by including prescribed duties for each member of the household. The head of the household was expected to hold all three superior roles—husband, father, and master—and the performance of each role was detailed by recommended duties expected from them (1992:340).

As the activity below will demonstrate to you, the early church also adopted the Greco-Roman household codes as ethics of the church.

ACTIVITY 3

Read the following household codes found in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:21-6:9 and compare them with Aristotle’s words in the above quote.

Consequently, when the gospel of freedom was first preached from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8) it became a major attack on the Roman imperial political structure. Roman household codes proscribe a reality very different than the one called for in Galatians 3:28. Galatians 3:28 stresses that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free, for we are all one in Christ. Indeed, the very launching of the church, where the Spirit of Power and Fire was *poured upon all flesh* enabling all to speak and be heard, was a major attack on the Roman Empire (Acts 2:14-18). It seems the church was then accused of being a lawless movement (see 1 Peter 2:12; Titus 2:8 and 1 Timothy 6:1-2) that taught women to abandon marriage, slaves to abandon their masters, and husbands and masters to recognise their subordinates as equals. The early church must have been persecuted for its gospel of freedom and equality. In response to the accusations and persecutions, the later writers encouraged the early church to adopt Roman household codes with its relationships of hierarchy and inequality as well as to recognise the Roman Emperor as an authority ordained by God. This perspective is common among most of the Deutro-Pauline, Pastoral and Catholic letters.

ACTIVITY 4

Read the following passages where the household codes were also adopted in Deutro-Pauline letters, and answer the questions below:

Colossians 3:18-4:1

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

- 1. Write down all the relationships that are identified in these passages.*
- 2. Write down all those who have power over and those who have to submit.*
- 3. Compare the above passages with Acts 2:1-21 and Galatians 3:27-28 and state the differences.*

Concern about persecution is evident from several books of the later early church. For example, 1 Peter 2:12 says, “Conduct yourselves honourably among the Gentiles, so that, *though they malign you as evildoers*, they may see your honourable deeds and glorify God. For the Lord’s sake accept the authority of every human institution whether of the emperor as supreme or governors”. The phrase in italics suggests that

Christians may have been persecuted. This chapter in 1 Peter highlights how the early Christians continued to adopt the household codes by urging slaves to accept the authority of their masters (vv.18-25) and wives to be subject the authority of their husbands (3:1-12). Similarly, 1 Timothy 6:1-2 says, “Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed”. Titus 2 adopts the same model and gives similar reasons; namely, that “*any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us*” (v. 8).

ACTIVITY 5

1. *Was it a good or bad approach to compromise the gospel of Christ with the demands of the Roman Imperial household codes. Give reasons for your answer.*
2. *Has your church ever differed with the state in its teaching? If so, how did they settle the differences?*

Now you know that 1 Timothy:

- Is a pastoral letter written by one church leader to another
- Was written in the second century
- Was written when the church was confronting problems of heresy and political persecution, which regarded the Christian church as a lawless institution because of its gospel of freedom and equality in Christ

The author of 1 Timothy thus uses Paul’s name to address these two issues. As we have seen above, adopting the Roman household codes was a contradiction of the gospel as taught by Jesus, and as taught by Paul and the early church.

ACTIVITY 6

Topic for debate:

Was the church of the Pastoral, Deutro-Pauline and Catholic letters backsliding or was it necessary for the church to adopt the Roman household codes to survive? Give reasons to support your perspective.

We will now turn to study in closer detail the author's approach to dealing with women and men's leadership in the church by studying some aspects of chapter 2, 3 and 5. Second, we will ask: what are the implications of 1 Timothy's story for the HIV&AIDS struggle? Come with me to the story world of 1 Timothy.

"I Permit no Woman to Have Authority Over a Man"
(1 Timothy 2:12)

Let us begin our journey into the story of 1 Timothy chapter 2. You will note that while the first chapter began by addressing heresies, the second chapter opens with concern for public leaders and peace for the church. As he says, "First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone, *for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and acceptable in the sight of God*" (1 Timothy 2:1-3). The italicised phrase emphasises that the church should recognise the authority of secular leaders and pray for them. This recognition will entail keeping their laws, especially the household codes, as we have seen above and as we will discover as we journey with 1 Timothy 2. The italicised phrase also encourages the church to pray for public leaders. From the phrase you can discern that Christians may have undergone persecution. Since the Roman Empire was a secular and colonial exploitative government that ruled other nations by force and subjected them to high taxes, the author had to justify why the believers should recognise the authority of the colonizer; namely, "this is right before the sight of God". I am forced to say, "what a theological scandal!" But maybe it was a necessary survival strategy by then.

ACTIVITY 7

War encourages the spread of HIV&AIDS. Having peaceful leaders is therefore central to the struggle against HIV&AIDS.

- 1. List the countries that are experiencing war in your continent. Write a prayer of peace for these countries.*
- 2. Pick one of the countries and find out how HIV infection soared due to war.*

In accordance with recognising the public rulers of the Roman Empire, you will note that the second part of 1 Timothy advocates relationships of inequality between men and women in the church. The author begins addressing men and women differently and allocating different roles to them (vv. 8-10). You will recall from Galatians, where Paul said that there is *no longer male or female* since we are *one in Christ*. Here in 1 Timothy the author is clearly underlining that there are *males* and *females* and they are divided and unequal in the church. Note that the author also makes recommendations on proper dress for women of faith. Research, however indicates that the recommended dress code was apparently one of the standard Roman Empire cultural expectations from women, namely modesty. The author, in other words, is making efforts to ensure that the church is culturally blended with the customs of its time. The second part of this chapter will further confirm this perspective. Let us read verses 11-15 together. It reads:

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.

You will note from the above verse that these expectations are very different from the expectations of the early church. For example:

- In the gospels, Jesus sent the likes of the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) and Mary Magdeline to go and tell (John 20). And the women went and proclaimed the gospel.
- In Acts, the Spirit was poured upon all flesh, enabling all to speak and spread the gospel (2:14-18).
- In Acts, the early church also had all things in common, selling and distributing goods to all as they had need (4:32-35). Hence Acts features such women as Tabitha, who took care of widows out of her means (9:36-43); Mary the Mother of John, who hosted the church in her house (12:12-17) and Prisca (18:1-4; 18-28) who travelled with her husband, preaching.

- In Romans 16, Paul lists a number of women whom he names as his co-workers in the preaching of the gospel. Some were deacons (16:1) and others were apostles (16:7).
- In 1 Corinthians, women prophesied and prayed in church. They were only required to cover their heads (11:2-16). Women were also given the option to marry or remain single, with Paul preferring singleness (7:1-40).

If we take these perspectives and compare them with 1 Timothy, you will note that the author of 1 Timothy is making a new and very different gospel from the one preached by Jesus (gospels), the early church (Acts), and Paul (Galatians and 1 Corinthians). The contrast here with Paul's teaching is so sharp that it is one of the reasons that scholarly research holds that 1 Timothy is not a Pauline letter, for its theology is very different. For example, in the last unit when Paul was discussing resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 he held that, "For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ". In contrast, the author of 1 Timothy exonerates Adam from original sin. 1 Timothy holds that women should learn in silence and be subordinate to men because: "Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (1 Timothy 2:13-14). In 1 Timothy, Adam (as opposed to Eve) is exonerated from the original sin and women are made to be the bearers of Eve's sin, hence their need to be subordinated to men. Let us read Genesis 1:26-28 to see whether we will reach the same conclusion with the author of 1 Timothy.

ACTIVITY 8

Read the Genesis 1:26-28 creation story and answer the following questions:

- 1. Does this story suggest that a man was created first?*
- 2. Explain what it means that both women and men were created in God's image. Is it possible that it suggests equality of women and men?*
- 3. Explain if the fact that they were both "blessed" and given "dominion over the earth" suggests that in the beginning God created women and men as equal in leadership and property ownership.*
- 4. Explain how you would relate the first creation story (Genesis 1:26-28) with 1 Timothy's use of the second creation story (Genesis 2-3) to make a theology that subordinates and silences women.*
- 5. Since all humanity inherited sin through Adam and Eve, write a letter to your Pastor point out that all people have been justified by God's grace through Christ.*

Let us return to 1 Timothy 2:11-15. Shockingly, you will note that in the passage, that women are not only denied their Spirit-given right to speak, their salvation has now become conditional: they will be *saved through childbearing!* While you saw that in Galatians, Paul underlined that none of us can be saved by our own good works, except by God's grace (Galatians 2:15-16), 1 Timothy has suggested that childbearing is a role that women must do to earn salvation. The grace of God is, according to 1 Timothy 2:11-15, not sufficient for women. What about women who are not married? What about women who are barren? Can they be saved?

The question you should ask is why is the author making this recommendation? The answer to this question lies in the two main reasons for his writing—that is, opposing heresy and getting the church to be consistent with the Roman household codes. Since he says the heresy includes discouraging marriage, the author now makes it a requirement that every woman must marry and have children. While Paul gave people a choice to marry or remain single (with a preference for singleness), this author is

now making marriage and childbearing a required role to fulfil women's salvation. Let us assess the requirement of marriage and childbearing further in chapter 5.

"Younger Widows Marry, Bear Children..." (1Timothy 5:9-15)

In chapter 5:9-15 the author revisits and underlines marriage and childbearing roles when he outlines the criteria for admitting women to the order of widows/nuns. Let us read the passage together below:

Let a widow be put on the list if she is not less than sixty years old and *has been married only once*. She must be well attested in good works, as *one who has brought up children*, shown hospitality, washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in everyway. *But refuse to put younger widows on the list*; for when their sensual desires alienate them from Christ, they want to marry...Besides that, they learn to be idle, gadding about from house to house; and they are not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not say. *So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, and manage their households, so as to give the adversary no occasion to revile us.*

I have highlighted some phrases for you that indicate that the author emphasises both marriage and childbearing for women. While in 1 Corinthians 7, Paul recommended that people should opt to remain single so that they can better devote themselves to the Lord's work, this author discourages women's preaching. By raising the admission age into the order of widows/nuns to sixty and making marriage and raising children part of the criteria for admission. In accordance with the statement in chapter 2, where he said, "Let every woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man". He once more writes off women's public teaching. This time he labels women preachers as "gossips and busybodies who go from house to house saying what they ought not to say". Harsh words indeed. He then closes this passage by returning to his main recommendation; namely, "*I would have younger widows marry bear children, and manage a household*". Let us now turn to chapter 3 and examine how the church leadership was redefined by the author of 1 Timothy.

Managing the Church as a Household (1Timothy 3:1-5)

In 1 Timothy 3, the author moves to adopt the household model as the model of leadership for the church. He writes that:

Whoever aspires to the office of Bishop, desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, *the husband of one wife*, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well; keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?

The problem with the household model for the church is that it is a model of inequality on the basis of gender, age and class. In Roman Empire there were men and women, children and parents, slave and masters in the household and they related along the model of inequality and hierarchy. In a household women, children and slaves were all silenced and subjected to the rule of the father, who was the master and husband. As you have already seen, women have been ordered to silent submission (2:12), slaves have been asked to do the same (6:1-2), and children as well (3:4). A church leader was now defined as a “the husband of one wife” (3:2), a phrase that implies that leadership was for males. In the gospels, however, Jesus was critical of the patriarchal family, stating that:

Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father. And a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me (Matthew 10:34-39).

Several times Christ redefined family according to faith. For example in Mark he said, “And who are my mother and my brothers? And looking at those who sat around him,

he said, ‘Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother’” (3:31-35). In 1 Timothy the author, however, sets out to do the opposite—redefine the church according to the earthly patriarchal family of the Roman Empire.

ACTIVITY 9

1. *Describe your churches position on women and men in church leadership.*
2. *Write a letter to your religious leader and make a case for the ordination of women in all the churches of Christ.*

I am sure you will agree with me that what we find in 1 Timothy is a major deviation from the prophetic gospel of Christ that was upheld by the early church and in Pauline letters. This pastoral letter is now part of the Christian canon. Indeed many churches that do not admit women in church leadership use these letters to legitimate their position. We can say, however, that the New Testament has more than one perspective on women and men’s relationships. Indeed, there is greater evidence that we are closer to the gospel of Christ if we empower all people regardless of gender, class, age and race (Luke 4:16-22 and Galatians 3:28).

Reading 1Timothy with the HIV&AIDS Story

Do you think 1 Timothy can assist us in our struggle with HIV&AIDS? If so how?

From what we know about the HIV&AIDS story, especially its link with social injustice and inequalities, 1 Timothy is largely unhelpful for the following reasons:

- **1 Timothy subordinates women to men and husbands.** HIV&AIDS research, however, indicates that one of the most deadly channels of the epidemic is gender inequality. As UNAIDS points out, “gender inequalities are a major driving force behind the AIDS epidemic. The different roles that societies assign to men and women profoundly affects their ability to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS. Reversing the spread of HIV therefore demands that women’s rights are realised and that women are empowered in all spheres of life (2000:21).

- **Silencing Women:** Much of women's vulnerability is that they do not have decision making powers, they do not have a voice in sexual and marriage relationships. Consequently, they cannot insist on safer sex, faithfulness and they are often subjected to violence. Unfortunately, 1 Timothy embraces this position when the author states: 'Let every woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She is to keep silent' (2:11-12).
- **Males as natural teachers:** In the HIV&AIDS story, it has been found that through their patriarchal status men are supposed to take informed decisions about the family—their wives and children. But in fact most men are quite ignorant about health issues, since they do not attend health clinics; NGO, magazines and educational information does not focus on male or family health issues for men. Wives and other female partners who are quite well informed through health clinic sessions, NGOs, women's meetings, associations, clubs, magazines and friends, are often forced to listen and follow the teaching of their uninformed husbands. This often means that men are less likely to want to practice protected sex, even when they are faithful; they are likely to insist on having a baby while they do not know their HIV&AIDS status. The 1 Timothy verse which says: "I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man," is quite unhelpful in the struggle against HIV&AIDS since it does not empower women to speak and be heard.
- **Required childbearing:** One of the factors that make women vulnerable to HIV&AIDS infection is a culture of almost required mothering. In such cultures, the strategy of prevention through abstinence and condomising becomes ineffective since childbearing is strongly expected. Once more, 1 Timothy is not helpful since it over-emphasises the role of mothering to the point of suggesting that it is part of women's salvation.
- **Required marriage:** In the HIV&AIDS era, it has been found that patriarchal marriage is one of the deadliest institutions for women in the most infected zones, for married women have less control over their bodies, property and have no decision making powers over their lives. Once more, 1 Timothy's

story does not help us in the struggle against HIV&AIDS, since marriage is almost required. 1 Timothy 5:14 encourages younger widows to marry, bear children and manage households. The option for singleness is cancelled.

- **Widows to marry:** In Timothy young widows are required to marry. As we have seen earlier in Unit 6, required remarriage for widows increases the spread of the virus rather than preventing it.
- **Women-centred care-giving roles:** In the HIV&AIDS era, women are also at the centre of the storm due to heavy burden of care. More men are needed to start washing and feeding the sick, etc. First, 1 Timothy's description of the qualities of a bishop does not include care giving. Rather, the book squarely lays out care giving as roles expected from women, but not men. As the author underlines in his description of the criteria for widowhood, "she must be well attested for good works as one who has brought up children, has shown hospitality, *washed the saints' feet, helped the afflicted* and devoted herself to doing good in everyway (v.10). In contrast, Jesus in John 13:1-20 models men as care and service givers.
- **Poor people to accept their poverty and oppression:** HIV&AIDS' link with poverty has been identified as a major driving force in the spread of the epidemic. Poverty eradication is thus essential for HIV&AIDS prevention and quality care. In 1 Timothy, the author does not uphold preaching good news to the poor, nor does he uphold a gospel of setting the captives free, the proclamation of the year of the Lord, or the pouring of the Spirit of power upon all as we observed with Jesus first sermon and the launching of the church, where they had all things in common. Rather, in 1 Timothy slaves are asked to maintain the status of servitude (6:1-2).
- **Youth Powerlessness:** Children in 1 Timothy are only presented as subordinates, while in the gospels Jesus identified children as belonging to the kingdom of God and as models of faith (Mark 10:13-16).

- **Household model:** The Roman household was a model of inequality and hierarchy, and this is what was adopted by the author of 1 Timothy. 1 Corinthians 7 on the other hand discussed sexual relationships within the model of the gospel. HIV&AIDS research and documentation however underlines that, “the starting point for an adequate response is the understanding that any bid to halt the AIDS epidemic has to include determined efforts to eradicate poverty and drastically reduce inequalities in both cause and effect, poverty, inequality and the AIDS epidemic are intimately linked” (UNDP Bots. 2000:56-57). 1 Timothy as a whole is a theology of inequality built on a framework of Greco-Roman household codes which makes its contribution towards the eradication of HIV&AIDS less useful.

Re-Reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS Prevention and Care

In his book, *How Can Religious Institutions Talk about Sexual Matters in their Communities*, Canon Gideon Byamugisha writes:

Let us therefore agree that theologically and pastorally speaking, when teachers, pastors and parents advice on what sexual unions are acceptable and those that are not in the religious settings; they should also give advice on what sexual unions are unsafe from HIV&AIDS and teenage pregnancies and those which are not. *The God who commands us not to fornicate [or] to commit adultery is the same God who commands us not to kill each other whether by bullets or by slow death causing viruses.* “For as long as you protected the least of my brothers/sisters, you did it to me” (Matthew 25: 40 contextualised) (2000:14-15).

A church that seeks to care for the least of these, in this setting the women, children and the poor (slaves), will need to re-read 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS prevention and quality care. This will require reading for the eradication of inequalities and empowering these socially disempowered groups. Part of re-reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS prevention will call for framing the letter within the larger gospel (good news) story of Jesus’ teaching and deeds, Acts and Pauline stories of upholding the good news of Christ. This would require the reader to realise that 1 Timothy is a

desperate response to a particular situation, which should not subjugate the gospel of Christ, a gospel preached to liberate the poor and captives.

SUMMARY

We briefly explored the historical background and themes of 1 Timothy. We realised that 1 Timothy was written in Paul's name by a different author in the second century. We found out that the author was anxious to counteract heresy in the church and to have the church appear as a law abiding institution that keeps the Roman household codes. Then we focused on three selected passages: 1 Timothy 2:8-11; 3:1-5 and 5:9-16. The first passage enabled us to study the roles of men and women and leadership. Chapter 3 enabled us to study how leadership became organised along the model of the Greco-Roman household codes as the church grew, sought to avoid heresy and public blame. Chapter 5, focusing on widows/nuns, highlighted for us how the changing story of the growing early church affected women's activity and status towards the second century. Basically, we found that the author strongly recommended marriage and childbearing for all women—a sharp difference from the teaching and practice of Jesus, Acts of the Apostles and Paul.

In general, we discovered that 1 Timothy is a very different and largely unpleasant territory, for its contents greatly differ with the gospel message of Christ. Christ's message focuses on setting the captives free. It also differs from Acts in that in Acts the Spirit was poured upon all flesh enabling all to speak and be heard; it differs greatly from Paul's message in Galatians and Corinthians, where all became one in Christ and where Paul encouraged many to remain single, instead of getting married. 1 Timothy was the opposite of everything we learnt in other books of the New Testament. In conclusion, we read 1 Timothy with the story of HIV&AIDS and found that it is largely unhelpful since by endorsing inequality and hierarchy in relationships it embraced most of the positions that make people vulnerable to HIV&AIDS. We concluded by making suggestions for re-reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS prevention, by underlining that the good news of Christ must prevail.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Before you proceed to unit 8, please respond to the items below.

1. State the various reasons that make Paul the unlikely author of 1 Timothy.
2. Give two reasons that led to the writing of 1 Timothy.
3. Describe the strategies adopted by the author to solve the problems in the church.
4. Describe how the changes affected male and female roles in the church.
5. Explain how 1 Timothy differs with the theology of Acts.
6. Explain why 1 Timothy differs with the theology of the gospels.
7. Explain why 1 Timothy's pastoral story is unhelpful in halting the spread of HIV&AIDS and the epidemic.
8. Discuss ways of re-reading 1 Timothy for HIV&AIDS prevention.

Please write your responses.



FURTHER READING

Chutando, E. and I. Phiri. 2003. "Women," pp.188-195 and C. Dibeela "Gender Injustice," pp. 226-227. In M. W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Dewey, Joanna. 1992. "1Timothy," pp. 353-358. In Newsom Carol & Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Dube, M.W. 2003. "Culture, Gender and HIV/AIDS: Understanding and Acting on the Issues," pp. 84-100. In M.W.Dube. ed. *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programmes*. Geneva: WCC.

Tamez, Elza. 2003. "1Timothy: What a Problem!" pp. 141-156. In F. Segovia. ed. *Toward a New Heaven and a New Earth. Essays in Honor of E. Schussler Fiorenza*. New York: Orbis.

_____. 2004. "1Timothy," pp. 508-515. In Daniel Patte ed. *Etl Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

UNIT 8

READING JAMES AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Hello and welcome to unit 8! In this unit we will take our journey in another direction by reading the letter of James (a catholic letter) with the story of HIV&AIDS. This journey will continue to give us a window into the life, growth and struggles of the early church. We will begin by journeying into the brief history and themes of the story of James. Thereafter, we will read the story of the letter of James with the story of HIV&AIDS by focusing on two passages: James 2:14-26 and James 5:1-6. The first passage will assist us on the question of translating faith into action. The second, passage will assist us to re-visit the issue of exploitative wealth, given that poverty is central to sponsoring the spread of HIV&AIDS and the lack of quality care. We shall be asking how the stories of James interact with the HIV&AIDS story and how they can assist us to weave new stories of being a healing church, and how you, my dear learner, can be a central agent towards this end.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- ⌘ Describe the history and themes of James
- ⌘ Describe how we can translate our faith into action in the
HIV&AIDS context
- ⌘ Propose ways of contributing to poverty reduction and eradication
- ⌘ Fashion yourself into an agent of change to confront HIV&AIDS

TOPICS

Unit 7: Reading James and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: Brief History of James and Themes in James

⌘ Type of Literature and Authorship

⌘ Themes: What?

“Faith without Works is Dead” (James 2:14-26)

“Come Now, You Rich People, Weep and Wail!” (James 5:1-6)

Summary, Self-Assessment, Further Reading

Introduction: Brief History of James and Themes of James

I am sure you want to understand James: who wrote the book; when was it written; where and why it written. When we ask these questions we are looking into the question of history and themes of James. Let us begin to answer these items by doing activity 1 below.

ACTIVITY 1

Read James 1:1 and answer the items that follow:

“James, the servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Greetings.”

- 1. Identify the author from the above verse.*
- 2. Identify the recipients of the book of James.*
- 3. From verse 1, what type of literature is James?*

Type of Literature and Authorship

You are right to say James is an epistle, since the letter identifies its author (James) and recipients (the twelve tribes in dispersion) and since it has a greeting. But this in itself does not solve the questions of authorship and recipients. The question now is who is this James who wrote the letter for us? The New Testament has four different men called James:

- James the brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55 and Acts 12:17)
- James the son of Zebedee (Matthew 4:21ff and Mark 10:35ff)
- James the son of Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3 and Mark 15:40)
- James the Just (Mark 15:40 and Acts 1:13).

Scholars conclude that the author must have been a Jewish Christian, who had a strong appreciation of Judaism and who saw Christianity as a continuation with the God of Israel as revealed in the Hebrew Bible. His Jewish identity is evident through his theology for example, the letter is addressed to the “twelve tribes in dispersions,” possibly referring to the twelve tribes of Israel.

But who are these “twelve tribes in dispersion?” Once more, this question has proven difficult to answer. It seems that the letter was a general or universal letter written for churches in general, but not to any specific church in a particular area. Similarly, scholarly research has found it difficult to put a date of authorship to the letter of James, or to speak with any precision on where it was written, why it was written and who wrote it. The letter addresses a number of issues in order to encourage the readers to assume a certain ethical positions in their faith. Consequently, James is classified under catholic letters, which means *universal or general letter*.

David Barr has provided us with the outline of the book of James below. It should give you an idea on the various issues addressed by James. It should also be an excellent guide for you when reading the letter of James as a whole.

READING GUIDE TO JAMES

Facing trials (1:1-4)

Wisdom from God through faith (5-8)

Lowly faithful and the Rich (9-11)

Temptation not from God (12-16)

Generosity is from God (17-18)

Doing Good: Need for Action (1:19-25)

True Religion: controlled speech and protection of the weak (1:26-27)

True Neighbour: Impartiality (2:1-13)

True Faith: Works (2:14-26)

Duties of Teachers: To Guide (3:1-5)
Dangers of the tongue (3:6-12)
Works done with gentleness (3:13-18)
Conflicts from inner desires (4:1-12)
False confidence of the Rich (4:13-5:6)
Final advice (5:7-20)
Patience, truthfulness, prayer
Rescue the wanderers (Barr 1995: 423).

Themes: Why?

We have already stated that James wrote to address several ethical issues which may not have been prompted by a particular problem in a specific church. Rather, it may have been general concerns in the churches or for the author. However, one thing notable from James is that some Christians misunderstood Paul's teaching about freedom and justification by faith—some thought it meant that believers had no obligation to live out their faith. This was indeed a major misinterpretation for, not only Paul, but also Jesus and the early church practically put their faith into action. The following explanation highlight this:

1. Christ did not only proclaim his gospel about the poor, captives and the sick (Luke 4:16-22), but he also practically spent time with the sick, the rejected and the poor by healing, feeding and affirming them. All the four gospels are a testimony that his faith was practically lived out. He moved from city to city spreading the gospel and implementing the good news.
2. The members of the early church who were all baptized with the Spirit of Power and Fire made major efforts to be faithful to the gospel of Christ. They knew that they needed to practically live out their faith by sharing their goods so that none had any need and none lived in poverty (Acts 2:43-47).
3. The Pauline church in Galatians is also being challenged to practically manifest the results of their faith by being able to practically demonstrate that they have been baptised in Christ, they are one in Christ and there is no longer

Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free (Galatians 3:28). They should be able to demonstrate this unity and equality in Christ by eating together and discarding race, ethnicity, gender, religion and class based divisions.

4. In James as in Acts (2:43-47), Galatians (2:11-14) and 1 Corinthians (11:17-22), divisions on the basis of class, race, ethnicity and gender kept surfacing. In James class divisions are especially notable. James is very critical of the rich and any special treatment that is offered to them at the expense of the poor. Let us now turn to our two passages, James 2:14-24 and 5:1-6, to assess some of these themes closely.

“Faith without Works is Dead” (James 2:14-24)

Why is it important for us to explore works of faith in the HIV&AIDS era? Too often the church is ineffective, since it does not make efforts to implement the gospel of Christ. Too many Christians are too happy to go to church, pray, sing, dance, go home, eat and sleep. Some Christians have given up their responsibility by adopting the position that *this world is not my home I am just passing by*; or by assuming that all will be perfect in heaven while this world is relegated to evil beyond redemption. A disengaged church in the HIV&AIDS context is often unable to contribute towards HIV&AIDS prevention; provision of quality care for the sick; breaking the stigma and discrimination and reducing the impact of the epidemic. Let us now travel together to assess what James says about a socially disengaged faith—that is faith that does not address social issues. In the box below you will find my re-reading of James 2 in the light of HIV&AIDS.

If you are studying with others, please read the following passage dramatically. If you are alone, please feel free to read both parts:

Men: What good is it my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you?

Women: Indeed my brothers and sisters what good is it, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save us from HIV infection, AIDS, opportunistic infection, stigma and discrimination? Can faith save us? Tell us, how?

Men: If a brother or a sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works is dead”.

Women: Yes, indeed, my brothers and sisters, if someone is poor and forced to engage in sex work and you say to them, “Go in peace, abstain from sex if you are not married or be faithful in marriage to prevent HIV&AIDS, and you do not address the issues that fuel their poverty, what is the good of that?” So your faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by practical implementation of preaching good news to the poor is dead to the HIV&AIDS struggle.

Men: But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works”. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.

Women: But some Christian churches will say, “I have faith that Christ will heal us of HIV&AIDS”. Show me how your faith in the gospel of Christ can stop the epidemic apart from your works of implementing the gospel? It is the church’s works of faith that will show us the gospel as a healing story in the HIV&AIDS context.

ALL: Do we believe that God is one? We do well to remember that even the demons believe—and shudder. So our faith apart from works is barren.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Write to your pastor and make concrete suggestions on how your church can embark on works that express their faith through HIV&AIDS prevention, provision of quality care to PLWHA and the affected, breaking stigma and discrimination and reducing its impact in the community.*

Like Matthew (6:10-11), James (2:14-26) insists that Christian faith must be implemented in order for God’s name to be hallowed and God’s will to be done on earth as in heaven. It is only when Christians practically live out the gospel of Christ that they can become the salt and light of the earth. If Christian faith is not practically

lived out, then it is good for nothing, or as James says, “*faith without works is dead*”. In the HIV&AIDS context, the power of the gospel will only be realised when believers become the agents of Christ by embarking on projects that translate their faith into social action. One cannot over emphasise this teaching, for too many churches are *sleeping giants* who have never woken up to ask: “how can we translate our faith in Christ into social action”. Too many churches and Christians put their lights under the table and their salt has lost its taste. James has news for all of us: “*Faith without works is dead*”. Let us now turn to read together James 5:1-6.

“Come Now, You Rich People, Weep and Wail” (James 5:1-6)

James’ concerns for the poor has already been discussed above. James points out that it does little good to say to the poor “Keep warm and eat your fill” if you do not supply their bodily needs (2:16). James underlines that such preaching is not good news to the poor if it does not change their situation of poverty. Similarly, at the very opening of chapter 2 (1-7) he began by warning against treating the rich with favouritism. He asks, “Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom, but you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you” (vv. 5-7). Two issues are notable here. James underlines that God has a special preference for the poor. Second, he identifies the rich as the oppressors. In chapter 5:1-6 he speaks directly to rich. Please, read this passage aloud as if you are speaking to the rich:

Come now, you rich people
Weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you
Your riches have rotted and your clothes are moth-eaten
Your gold silver have rusted,
And rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire
You have laid up treasures for the last days. Listen! *The wages of labourers
Who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out*
And the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts
You have lived on earth in luxury and pleasure
You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter
You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who do not resist you

ACTIVITY 3

1. *List the crimes of the rich stated in the above passage.*
2. *State the crimes of rich people in your country.*
3. *Explain what has led some people to poverty in your country.*
4. *According to the passage, what is God's response to exploited poor labourers?*

James critically links the wealth of the rich with the poverty of the poor. The rich have acquired their wealth through exploiting the poor. His statement, while it is about two thousand years old, remains true to our world of the rich and poor today; and to the so called developed and developing countries. The rich are rich because they have put in place economic systems that make the poor dependent on them. Most poor people are hard working. They work long hours, yet they get poorer. Why? It is because some people harvest the labour of the poor and keep their wages. Is your neighbour poor? Is your country poor? Is your continent poor? The question to ask is who is harvesting the labour of the poor and keeping their wages? The opposite must also be asked: Is your neighbour rich? Is your country rich? Is your continent rich? If your country and continent are rich you should ask whose labour and wages have been harvested to building those riches. Apply those same questions to your own life. The above verse underlines that the exploitation and oppression of the vulnerable is unacceptable by pointing out that, “the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts”.

While James wrote about 2000 years ago, his observations remain true especially in the situation of poor countries that are highly indebted to the World Bank and IMF. According to Jubilee Dept campaign, the labour of the poor is claimed by the rich countries for their own enrichment.

ACTIVITY 4

Note the following facts:

Africa spends USD \$15 billion every year in debt service, over USD \$30 million per day.

It is estimated that USD \$7-15 billion is needed annually to fight HIV&AIDS in Africa.

Africa spends 4 times as much on debt repayment than on healthcare (Quoted from N. Hadebe's module 8 on A Theology of Healing in the HIV&AIDS Context).

*Do you think most workers of Africa own their labour or is it harvested by the rich?
Explain your answer.*

In the above passage (5:1-6) James speaks prophetically by addressing the rich, naming their sins, underlining that judgment is sure to come and underlining that God is on the side of the poor (v.4). Just as the Lord saw and heard the suffering of the enslaved Israelites (Exodus 2:1-12), God hears the cries of the poor today and everywhere. Given the role of poverty in the spread of HIV&AIDS, the church needs to assume the prophetic role of questioning the source of poverty in society and the world. The churches must insist that all labours should own their labour and they should be paid wages worth their labour.

SUMMARY

We briefly explored the historical background and themes in the letter of James. We discovered that James is a catholic letter, that is, it is addressed to the general church. It deals with several ethical issues. Nonetheless, we pointed out that the author seems to come from a Jewish background. He wants to expound Christianity in continuity with the God of Israel. Second, he wants to counteract misinterpretations of Paul's concept of justification by faith. The author underlines that unless faith is practically lived out in actions, such faith is dead. We saw how this statement is consistent with Jesus' deeds, the acts of the early church and Pauline's teaching. According to James, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep one unstained by the world" (1:27).

We thus underlined that in the HIV&AIDS context, unless the church can translate its faith into concrete action, then Christian faith will be dead and ineffective towards HIV&AIDS prevention, promotion of quality care, breaking stigma and discrimination as well as in reducing the impact of HIV&AIDS in our communities. Christian faith needs to be socially engaged to bring to realisation healing, hope, compassion and justice. The second passage examined directly addressed the rich for their sins of exploiting the poor. The passage makes a link between wealth and poverty. It denounces the rich for exploitation. The passage emphasises that God hears the cries of the poor: “The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts”. Given that poverty is a number one catalyst in sustaining the HIV&AIDS horror story, James’ prophetic words to the wealthy are instructive for churches that seek to be part of weaving a story of hope, compassion, justice and healing in this our world and God’s creation.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Now that you have finished unit 8, please take the self-assessment activity below before you proceed to unit 9.

1. Explain what it means that James is a catholic letter.
2. State some of the reasons that led to the composition of James.
3. How is James’ position on the statement “faith without works is dead” helpful in the HIV&AIDS struggle for healing?
5. In a paragraph, discuss why you think James’ position on wealth is important to our efforts to prevent the spread of HIV&AIDS and to provide quality care.



FURTHER READING

Dibeela, P. I. and T.S. Maluleke. 2003. "Poverty and Economic Justice," pp. 220-225. In M. W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guideline and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Barr, David. 1995. "James, Jude, Hebrews, Peter," pp. 420-450. In D. Barr. *New Testament Story*. London: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Conti, Christina. 2004. "James," pp. 539-544. Daniel Patte. ed. Etl. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Dowd, Sharyn. 1992. "James," pp. 368-370. In Newsom Carol and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Tamez, Elza. 1994. "James," pp. 381-391. In Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. ed. *Searching the Scriptures Volume 2*. New York: Crossroads.

UNDP and Bots Govt. 2000. *Botswana Human Development Report 2000: Toward and AIDS-Free Generation*. Gaborone: UNDP, 2000.

PART VI

READING THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE IN THE HIV&AIDS CONTEXT

In part 4 you will be introduced to the collection of Johannine literature. It consists of the Gospel of John, the three letters of John (1, 2 and 3 John) and Revelation. As you can see, Johannine literature consists of various families of the New Testament literature; namely, a gospel, letters and apocalyptic literature. This group is called Johannine literature because it is believed to have been produced from a community that was closely connected with John, the son of Zebedee, one of the disciples of Jesus. In the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Peter is featured as the disciple that Jesus loved but in John's gospel, John is identified as the disciple whom Jesus loved (19:26, 35; 21:20-24). The language, style and ideas of the three epistles (1, 2, 3 John) closely match that of the gospel of John, suggesting that they come from the same circle of writers and the same community. Revelation, on the other hand, identifies its author as John (1:1, 4, 9, 22:8) but its style and theological perspective significantly differ from the rest of Johannine literature.

Johannine literature is dated towards the end of the first century. This dating is based on the contents of the books, which indicate concerns of a later church. For example, the gospel of John has a very high Christology (John 1:1) which suggests development of ideas from the synoptic gospels. The letters are concerned with some type of heresy, possibly Doceticism (1 John 2:18-27 and 4:1-3), which is associated with the second century. Doceticism was a teaching that denied that Jesus was a human being and insisted that he only *seemed to be human*. Consequently, 2 John, verse 7 says: "Many deceivers have gone out in the world, those who do not confess that Jesus has come in flesh; any such person is a deceiver and antichrist!"

UNIT 9

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Welcome to unit 9 where we will focus on reading the gospel of John in the context of HIV&AIDS. Put on your most comfortable walking shoes, for you are about to take a pleasant journey into one of the most beautifully crafted story worlds of the New Testament: The Gospel of John. The gospel of John has provided us with some of the most memorable verses such as: “In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God” (1:1) and “For God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not die but have eternal life” (3:16) and “I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly” (10:10). Despite its beauty, John’s gospel embodies one of the most intense conflicts with fellow Jews in the neighbouring synagogue (John 9).

In unit 9 we shall take a short journey into the history and themes of John’s gospel. After that we shall study the Gospel of John in the light of HIV&AIDS by focusing on two passages, John 9:1-7 and John 13:1-20. The first passage will help us to address HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination and gospel ways of disabling it. The second passage will assist us to take journeys into HIV&AIDS care giving and gospel stories of embracing and giving quality care to PLWHA and the affected.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of unit 9 you should be able to:

- ✠ Narrate the history and themes of the gospel of John
- ✠ Discuss gospel ways of disabling HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination
- ✠ Discuss gospel imperatives of giving quality care to PLWHA and the affected
- ✠ Propose ways of involving men in HIV&AIDS care giving.

TOPICS

Unit 9: The Gospel of John and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: Brief history of John and Themes of John

- ⌘ Themes of John's Gospel
- ⌘ Purpose: Why?
- ⌘ Date and Author: When and Who?

Fighting the HIV&AIDS Stigma (John 9:1-6)

Promoting Caregiving: "You ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:1-20)

Summary, Self Assessment, Further Reading

Introduction: Brief History of John and Themes of John

As you will recall from unit 1, John is the fourth gospel in the New Testament. It is quite different from Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) in its content, structure and plot. The time setting of John's gospel is three years while in the Synoptic Gospels it is one year. That is, in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus' ministry lasted for one year, while in John it lasted for three years. In John, Jesus goes to Jerusalem to attend the Passover three times—and we know that the Passover took place once a year. In terms of content, the Gospel of John does not have parables, but allegories. It also does not have miracles, but what it calls *signs*. The allegories (10:1-21; 15:1-17) and the seven signs (2:1-12; 4:42-54; 5:1-9; 6:1-15; 6:16-21; 9; 10:22-11:57) are well selected to elaborate its main theme; namely, the identity of Jesus as the revealer of God. You will find that the language of John is quite distinct. The author is a focused and emphatically repetitious writer, who uses words, phrases and re-phrased sentences to restate his points. The author also uses symbols, comparisons and irony extensively. Take a journey into the following verses in activity 1 and observe John's language for yourself.

ACTIVITY 1

Read John 1:1-5

- 1. In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.*
- 2. He was in the beginning with God.*
- 3. All things came into being through him and without him not one thing came into being.*
- 4. In him was life and the life was the light of all people.*
- 5. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.*

- 1. List all the words that are repeated and the number of times that they are repeated.*
- 2. List all the repeated phrases.*
- 3. List the sentences that are rephrased.*
- 4. List all the symbols that are used in these verses.*
- 5. Who is the Word? What does it mean that 'in him was the life?'
What is the darkness? And what is the light?*

Themes of John's Gospel

As you can see from the above opening verses, the main theme of John's gospel is to reveal the identity of Jesus. John's gospel seeks to answer the question: "Who is Jesus?" To this end, John's Gospel is much focused and well organised. Almost every allegory, sign, character and conversation with different figures is meant to depict the identity of Christ often by comparing him with other major Jewish figures. For example in:

- The opening chapter he is compared with both John the Baptist (1:6-9 and 19-32) and Moses (1:14-18)
- Chapter 2 he is compared with the Temple (2:19-22)
- Chapter 3 he is compared with Nicodemus (3:1-11), Moses (3:14-15) and John the Baptist (3:22-30)
- Chapter 4 he is compared with Jacob (4:11-15)
- Chapter 8 he is compared with Abraham (8:31-58)

In all these comparisons with great figures Jesus always comes out tops! For example:

- John the Baptist was a man from God, he himself was not the light (1:8)
- The law came through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus (1:14-17)
- Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel but who did not understand, Jesus spoke of what he knows and what he had seen (3:1-13)
- The descendants of Jacob drank from his well and thirsted again, but those who drink the water that Jesus gave will not thirst again (4:13)
- Moses gave people manna, Jesus is the bread of life that permanently quenches both hunger and thirst (6:35-37)
- Israelites held Abraham to be their great ancestor and Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (8:58).

Indeed the very first verse of John’s gospel equates Jesus with the beginning of time, with the creator and almost identifies him with God: “And the word was God” (1:1). Because of its focus on the identity of Jesus, the gospel of John has a unique collection of sayings in which Jesus describes his identity. For example he says:

- “I am the way the truth and the life” (14:6)
- “I am the true vine” (15:1)
- “I am the bread of life” (6:35)
- “I am the good shepherd ” (10:11)
- “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25).

ACTIVITY 2

1. Which of the above ‘I am’ sayings is the most relevant to your HIV&AIDS context?
2. In a paragraph discuss why you find it useful in the HIV&AIDS struggle.

It would seem the Johannine community position of holding that Jesus is the Messiah led to their excommunication from the synagogue (John 9:22; 16:2; 20:19), a factor that led to bitter feelings between the Johannine Christian Jews and the synagogue Jews. Of all the New Testament Gospels, John presents by far the most hostile picture of relations between Jesus and the synagogue Jews of his time. Throughout the book, Jesus rebukes the Jews for their failure to recognise or understand him, yet Jesus and

his disciples were Jews themselves (Rensberger 1989:2011). The gospel's intense comparison and desire to highlight Jesus as the only revealer of God, is partly a response to their strained relationship with Jews of the synagogue, since the author set out to define the separate identity of Christian Jews as compared to the synagogue Jews, whom he sometimes calls the disciples of Moses (9:28-29).

Purpose: Why?

John's gospel is quite explicit as to why it was written. Read the following activity.

ACTIVITY 3

Read John 20:30-31 and answer the questions that follow.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, Son of God, and through believing you may have life in his name.

- 1. Using the above verses, write to your teacher and tell her/him why John's gospel was written.*
- 2. Do you remember why Luke was written? How does John's aim compare with Luke's goal?*

Date and Author: When and Who?

On the question of *when was John written*, most scholars date the gospel of John towards the end of the century, around 90 CE, at Ephesus. On the question of *who wrote John's gospel*, the author of John is not really known, but he is associated with the John, the son of Zebedee, or the community that he founded.

With this brief introduction to the history and themes of John, let us now turn to John 9:1-7 and John 13:1-20 and take our journey to its second stage. First, we will journey into the story world of John 9:1-7 in search of gospel ways of counteracting HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination. Second, we will travel to the story world of John 13:1-20 in search of gospel frameworks for giving quality care.

Fighting the HIV&AIDS Stigma (John 9:1-7)

What is HIV&AIDS stigma? In their booklet, *A Conceptual Framework and Basis for Action: HIV&AIDS Stigma and Discrimination*, UNAIDS gives the following definition of stigma:

Stigma has ancient roots. It has been described as a quality that ‘significantly discredits’ an individual in the eyes of others. It also has important consequences for the way in which individuals come to see themselves. Importantly stigmatisation is a *process*. ...within a culture or setting, certain attributes are seized upon and defined by others as discreditable or unworthy. Stigmatisation therefore describes a process of devaluation...much HIV/AIDS-related stigma builds upon and reinforces earlier negative thoughts. People with HIV/AIDS are often believed to have deserved what has happened by doing something wrong. Often these ‘wrongdoings’ are linked to sex or to illegal and socially frowned-upon activities, such as injecting drug use. Men who become infected may be seen as homosexual, bisexual or as having had sex with prostitutes. Women with HIV&AIDS are viewed as having been promiscuous or having been sex workers. The family and community often perpetuate stigma and discrimination, partly through fear, partly through ignorance, and partly because it is convenient to blame those that have been affected first (2002:8).

ACTIVITY 4

Using the above quotation answer the following questions:

- 1. Define stigma.*
- 2. Explain why stigmatisation is regarded as a process.*
- 3. List some of the reasons that are often given to justify HIV&AIDS stigma.*
- 4. From your own community, what are the reasons given to stigmatize PLWHA?*
- 5. Outline some of the cultural views that endorse stigmatisation against PLWHA.*
- 6. Did you ever experience some form of stigma? If so, describe how you felt.*

UNAIDS continues to explore the impact of HIV&AIDS stigma as follows:

Because of stigma associated with HIV&AIDS, and the discrimination that may follow from this, the rights of people living with HIV&AIDS and their families are frequently violated. This violation of rights increases the negative impact of the epidemic. At the level of the individual, for example, it causes undue anxiety and distress—factors that are known in themselves to contribute to ill-health. At the level of the family and community, it causes people to feel ashamed, to conceal their links with the epidemic, and to withdraw from participation in more positive social responses. And at the level of society as a whole, discrimination against people with HIV&AIDS reinforces the mistaken belief that such action is acceptable and that those infected with HIV&AIDS should be ostracised and blamed (2002:11).

ACTIVITY 5

Study the above quotation carefully and answer the following questions:

- 1. Describe the impact of stigma on PLWHA.*
- 2. Describe the impact of stigma on HIV&AIDS prevention.*
- 3. What is the impact of stigma at a family level?*

The above two quotes have helped you to understand stigma and its impact on HIV&AIDS prevention and care. Let us now take our journey to the story world of John's gospel (9:1-7). We shall be asking, what were the horror stories of stigmatisation in John's gospel? How did Jesus handle them and how can his strategy assist us to confront our own horror stories of HIV&AIDS stigma? Let us begin by reading the following story:

ACTIVITY 6

Read the following verses and answer the questions below:

1. As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3. Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world". 6. When he said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes. 7. Saying to him, "Go, wash in Siloam...then he went and washed and he came back able to see.

- 1. Who is stigmatised in this story?*
- 2. Name the ways that were used to stigmatize him.*
- 3. How does Jesus de-stigmatise the blind man?*
- 4. Do you think there are some in your church who link ill-health with sin?*
- 5. Write to your church leaders and suggest ways in which the church can take leadership in breaking stigmatisation in your community.*

In the above reading, you will note that Jesus says the man was born blind "so that God's works might be revealed in him". This can be a puzzling verse (one that can easily be interpreted to reinforce stigma), yet it can be read otherwise. That is, instead of stigmatising the disadvantaged or sick people, the church should view it as an opportunity to demonstrate the gospel that sets the captives free. As you will note, Jesus assumes this role. He takes it upon himself to reveal God's compassion to this man by healing him. As a follower of Christ, you are called to the same responsibility.

Namely, we are called to help people to cease from stigmatising PLWHA through simplistic linking of HIV&AIDS with individual sin. Second, we should break the stigma by taking the role of being healers of the sick. Since stigmatising causes anxiety, distress and ill-health, if you work to eliminate stigma you will be involved in a significant process of weaving stories that enable social, spiritual and mental health among PLWHA and the affected. Becoming a healer may involve working for the eradication of poverty and other social injustices that fuel the epidemic. It can involve fighting all forms of stigmatisation. It may also include taking a prophetic role to pressurize your government to make ARV (antiretroviral) drugs available and affordable to all who need them.

Promoting Care-giving: *"You Ought to Wash One Another"*

(John 13:1-20)

Given that HIV&AIDS largely remains incurable and given that it affects everything and I believe everyone, the promotion of quality care giving is central to the struggle against HIV&AIDS in all sectors. Groups that need care include PLWHA and the affected. Under the affected this includes orphaned children, caregivers, widows and the grieved—who may be fearful, angry and helplessness. Indeed, it includes whole communities that may be gripped by hopelessness. Among PLWHA, those who most need care include those who may be stigmatised and subjugated to mental and spiritual oppression. It also includes those who are in the final stages of the infection, that is, those who have almost lost all their immunity—those in the AIDS stage. The latter can require intensive care, mentally, physically and spiritually. Care-givers may be needed twenty four hours a day to wash, feed, change, turn them, talk to them, read for them, sing, pray and bless them. AIDS caregivers often give up their work because of the demands of care. Traditionally, this work falls in the hands of women, but as millions get sick and die each year, it is increasingly becoming too heavy a job to remain in the hands of women alone. Indeed, if HIV&AIDS is a national crisis, then we need women and men to defend their national security against the HIV&AIDS invasion. Let us journey into the story world of one Zimbabwean woman care giver to discern the demands of caregivers.

ACTIVITY 7

Read the following story and answer the questions underneath.

My husband passed away when he was 35. He was ill for six months. He used to work as a general labourer in a big firm and only came home at weekends. We had eight children, but the last two both died. This left me with six children to feed. It is very hard. The two eldest had to leave school to try and earn money, but I am trying to keep the youngest four in school. In the early stages of my husband's illness we could cope. It became difficult when he lost his job. We had to spend a lot of his savings on special food for him, and he lost his medical cover. Now I grow maize and try to make money selling crochet work, but it is not sufficient. I cannot get a proper job—in these days it is even more difficult as a woman, because it is men who are expected to work....If I die, the oldest children will have to take care of the young ones (Zimbabwean woman in SAFAIDS and WHO, 1995:22).

- 1. Identify PLWHA who are in need of care in the story and their caregiver/s.*
- 2. Identify the affected in the story and their caregiver/s.*
- 3. Does the caregiver need more care? Who should give her care?*
- 4. Suggest how the church can assist this caregiver.*
- 5. Make a list of NGOs and government organisations that can meet some of her needs and the needs of other caregivers.*

Our question now is what are the good news stories on care giving? Who must give care and who must receive care? Can men give care? In John 13:1-20 we have an excellent gospel story of care giving and service. Take your Bible and read the passage aloud. You will find that it is a farewell discourse. Jesus knew that the end of his life was close. He decided that it was important to leave his disciples with a message of care giving to one another. But as they say, “action speaks louder than words”. Jesus decided to use actions to communicate the centrality of caregiving. So standing up,

He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who

said to him, “Lord are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know what I am doing but later you will understand”. Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet”. Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me”. Simon Peter said to him, “Lord not my feet only but also my hands and head”. After he had washed their feet, had his robe and returned to the table he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that I am. *So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.* For I have set an example, but you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly I tell you, servants are not greater than their master”.

This is a beautiful and subversive story of care giving! Why? Since care giving is service, it is often culturally associated with subordinate groups such as women, servants or low class people. It is for this reason that in most cultures caregivers are women rather than men; servants rather than masters; low class people rather than high class ones. But as you can see in this story, Jesus turns the tables around. Peter knows that it is culturally not proper for masters to serve their followers and thus he protests. Jesus is Lord, master, teacher, man, Son of God, etc, he has all the social status that should make him seek to be served. Yet he turns the expectations around and shows us that those who are in power should express their power through serving and care giving, rather than waiting to be served. Indeed, much earlier in the synoptic gospels, when his disciples were arguing about who is the greatest among themselves: “Jesus sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘*Whoever wants to be the first, must be last of all and servant of all*’” (Mark 9:35). A little later in Mark 10:43-44, Jesus revisited the question of greatness and authority with his disciples again saying,

You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and the great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be the first among you must be the servant of all. *For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.*

Repetition in the New Testament serves to emphasise a point. In the above verses, Jesus repeats to his disciples that they should have a new model of authority—namely,

to express power through giving service. Christian leadership is, therefore, not about *lording it over* one's subjects, rather, the model of greatness and authority is assuming the role of being a servant of all. Giving service is central to our Christian identity. In John 13:1-20, when Jesus was saying farewell to his disciples, he returned again to serving by practically washing the feet of his disciples. In the HIV&AIDS era, we need to embody this understanding of service, for if we cannot give service, then we cannot have anything to share with Christ who came to serve and not to be served.

ACTIVITY 8

Using the above story, write to your church leader and propose how the men in your church can begin to model men as caregivers to other men in your community.

John 13:1-20 is, therefore, a powerful story that challenges us in the face of HIV&AIDS care giving demands. You and me are challenged to realise that our very Christian faith must be expressed through a *hands on* service to all those who need it, regardless of their status towards us. As Jesus says, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet". Our social status should never ever make us feel we are beyond care giving, for as he continues to underline, "a servant is not greater than his master". Christians are not greater than Jesus Christ. If Jesus, our Lord teacher could serve, how can we be above him? With the HIV&AIDS care-giving demands, all of us in our families, neighbourhood, churches and communities should be there with our hands on care giving, washing, feeding, changing and talking to the sick.

The job of care giving should not be just for women, wives, widows, grandmothers, the girl-child and the poor only. Rather, even men, husbands, fathers, widowers, grandfathers, male priests, bishops, pastors and the boy-child should embody the example that Christ has set for us. All of us should be care givers to each other in the HIV&AIDS invaded world. In short, we ought to wash one another's feet.

SUMMARY

In unit 9, we took an exciting journey into the history and themes of John's gospel. We realised that the gospel of John was written within the Johannine community toward the end of the first century. We also discovered that the main theme of the gospel of John was to answer the question of who Jesus is. Secondly, we studied the Gospel of John in the light of HIV&AIDS by focusing on two passages; John 9:1-7 and John 13:1-20. We assessed the meaning, manifestations and impact of HIV&AIDS stigma. The story of John 9:1-7 helped us to explore effective gospel ways of addressing HIV&AIDS stigma and discrimination and the gospel ways of disabling it. We then examined the challenges and demands of HIV&AIDS care giving. The story of John 13:1-20 assisted us to take journeys into HIV&AIDS care giving and to weave a gospel framework for embracing and giving quality care to PLWHA and the affected. It underlined that all of us, men and women alike, should be caregivers, regardless of social status. I am sure you will agree with me that we are becoming better equipped to successfully confront and disable the power of the HIV&AIDS horror story in our communities and world.

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Now that you have completed unit 9 on Reading the Gospel of John and the HIV&AIDS Story, please attempt the following questions before you proceed to the last unit.

1. In a paragraph describe the historical background of John's gospel.
2. In a paragraph discuss the themes of John's Gospel.
3. How can John 9:1-7 and John 13:1-20 assist us to fight HIV& AIDS?
4. If you have *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV&AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*, turn to pages 84-145 and select four sermon guidelines and prepare a one month preaching plan or Bible study that will assist your church to deal with issues of stigma, discrimination, and men as HIV&AIDS caregivers.



FURTHER READING

Akoto, D. B. E. A. 2001. "The Mother of the Ewe and the Firstborn Daughter as the Good Shepherd in the Cultural Context of the Ewe People: A Liberating Approach," pp. 260-277. In G. West and M. W. Dube. eds. *The Bible in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

Kgalemang, M. T. 2004. "Deconstructing the HIV/AIDS Stigma," pp. 169-185. In Musa W. Dube and M. Kanyoro. ed. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.

Musopule, A., P. Dibeela and F. Moyo. 2003. "Stigma and Discrimination," pp. 125-133. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Sermon Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC.

Reinhartz, Adele. 1994. "The Gospel of John," pp. 561-600. In Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza eds. *Searching the Scriptures Volume 2*. New York: Crossroads.

Schubert, Benedict. 2005. "Acting in Awareness—John 9: 1-7," pp. 128-130. *God Breaks the Silence: In Preaching in the Times of AIDS*. Wuppertal: UEM.

UNAIDS. 2003. *A Report of Theological Workshop Focusing on HIV and AIDS Related Stigma*. Windhoek, Namibia 8-11, December.

UNIT 10

READING REVELATION AND THE HIV&AIDS STORY

OVERVIEW

Welcome to unit 10! You have come a long way from the gospels to Revelation, the last book of the New Testament. You are now taking a unique journey that will show you vivid and spectacular visions. I suggest that for this journey, you should get yourself a good pair of binoculars to have a clear vision as we travel into the story world of Revelation. You must be warned: the visions of Revelation can be quite violent, frightening and gender insensitive. When you take a journey into the story world of Revelation, you are invited to participate and experience a frightening world, so much so that you will emerge yearning for a different story world. In short, Revelation, more like the HIV&AIDS story, is a horror story that challenges us to seek a new heaven and a new earth for our current world.

In unit 10, we shall briefly examine the history and themes of Revelation. Second, we shall take two short journeys into the story worlds of Chapter 18 and 21. The first chapter will assist us to look critically at imperial relations (international powers of dominance) and their role in creating and sustaining poverty. Chapter 21 will assist us to keep in mind that as long as exploitation exists, we should not cease to have dreams about a new heaven and a new earth, where justice will be served to all in the earth community. The latter dream is imperative since HIV&AIDS is an epidemic that is socially driven.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of unit 10 you should be able to:

- ⌘ Describe the historical background and themes of Revelation
- ⌘ Describe the early church's approach to international exploitation
- ⌘ Suggest ways in which the current church can maintain its prophetic voice
- ⌘ Propose ways of weaving justice-seeking stories of economic justice from Revelation

TOPICS

Unit 10: Reading Revelation and the HIV&AIDS Story

Introduction: Brief History of Revelation and Themes of Revelation

⌘ Date, Author and Purpose

⌘ Type of Literature

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!” (Revelation 18)

The Context of Babylon Today and the Struggle Against HIV&AIDS

Heaven has a Language for this Trade

Justice for All is Health for All

Summary: Eying a New Heaven and a New Earth, Self-Assessment Activity

Further Reading

Introduction: Brief History of Revelation and Themes of Revelation

Our journey into the history and themes of Revelation will seek to answer the following questions:

- When was the book of Revelation written?
- Who wrote it?
- Why did they write and who is addressed by the book?
- What type of literature is Revelation?

Date, Author and Purpose

The book of Revelation is dated around 90-95 CE, although some scholars have made strong arguments for an earlier date. The author of the book identifies himself as John who is exiled to the Island of Patmos and who shares in the *persecution* of other Christians “because of the testimony of Jesus” (1:9; 2:10; 12:17). His letter is addressed to the seven churches of Christ in Asia (2:1-3:1-22) who are subjected to persecution, false teaching and temptation. The letter seeks to encourage them to remain faithful.

ACTIVITY 1

Read Revelation 2:10-11 below and answer the questions that follow.

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, you will have affliction. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever conquers will not be harmed by second death.

- 1. Identify the challenges facing the churches.*
- 2. Who is identified as the persecutor?*
- 3. How does John advise the churches to handle persecution?*

The political persecution that gave rise to Revelation is debated. Some believe it occurred much earlier than the writing (64 CE), thus associating it with Nero's persecution of Christians. Others date the persecution closer to the composition of the book (90-95 CE), thus associating the persecution with Emperor Domitian. It is the second date that has been found more persuasive. Various verses in Revelations attest that Christians had been persecuted and executed for their faith (2:13; 6:9-11; 13:15) and the author had suffered the same (1:9). Given their subjugation to persecution, the author writes to say there is no escape: Christians have to live through the period of persecution, remain faithful to their faith and that at the end the battle will be won by the lamb—Jesus Christ—and that a new heaven and a new earth will be ushered in. In short, victory is certain.

I am sure you are asking: who was persecuting the churches in Asia? The book of Revelation will use the name Babylon (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) to refer to Rome. At other times, Revelation speaks of the seven headed beast (17:3) and, at other times, it refers to the “whore of Babylon” (17:5). Despite these various names given to the persecutor, most scholars are agreed that the names refer to the Roman Empire and the Emperor, who sometimes demanded to be worshipped.

In the book of 1 Timothy, we began to discuss that the church was persecuted for its radical gospel message of freedom in Christ. In 1 Timothy the author's approach was to conform to the Roman household codes and culture; to make the church to appear as a law abiding institution. In Revelation, the author's approach is that Christians should not conform to the Roman Empire. Rather, they must endure the persecution for victory against the persecutors is certain. As the author says, "Be faithful until death" (2:10).

In fact, the whole New Testament, the birth of Christ and the church, took place under the Roman Empire. As a colonising power, it colonised other nations, enforced its rule on them, demanding taxes to be paid to Rome (Matthew 22:15-22) and promoting its culture on the colonized. Indeed Jesus was crucified by the Roman Empire, for allegedly appearing to be a threat to the imperial rule (John 19:1-16). Jesus and the early church were colonized subjects, and their teaching was named as subversive to the imperial authority.

ACTIVITY 2

1. *Do you come from a country that was once colonised?*
2. *Name the country that colonised your country.*
3. *How did your country set itself free from its coloniser?*
4. *In your view, who are the empires of today?*

Type of Literature

The very opening of the book identifies it as "the *revelation* of Jesus Christ" (1.1). As you can discern from the above title, the book seeks *to reveal* or make known the known and unknown things to the church about their current and future state of persecution. Revelation is, therefore, a book of visions about the future. It is in chapter 4:1 that the visions about the future begin to be unrolled. As he says, "After this *I looked* and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I heard speaking said, 'Come up here, *I will show you* what must take place after this'". Revelation is thus classified as apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic is a Greek word meaning uncovering, revealing or making unknown things known.

The book of Revelation belongs to the apocalyptic literature, which is a political literature of resistance that uses vivid images, symbols, metaphors and visions. It characterises the writer—who uses a secret name—as a seer. The visions are usually a comment about the present and how the present will be changed in the future. The author thus narrates the story in forms of revealed visions. For example, this is how John explains the contents of his book in Revelations 1:10-20:

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, '*Write in a book what you see* and send it to the seven churches to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning, *I saw* seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands *I saw* one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force. When I saw him, I fell to his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me saying, 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead and see, I am alive forever; I have the keys of Death and Hades. *Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this.*'

As stated above, the whole book of Revelation presents itself as a description of vivid visions that the seer *sees* and describes for the seven churches in Asia. The visions are revealed to him by the Son of Man, who instructs him to write what he sees. Revelation is quite violent and uses the female gender in a problematic way. In case you want to read Revelation at a greater depth, the following content outline, which highlights the central visions, will assist you:

Part 1: A vision of the glory of Christ (chapter 1)

- Letters to the seven churches 2-3

Part 2: Visions of judgment and victory

- The seven seals 5:1-81
- Seven trumpets 8:2-11:19

- The dragon and his kingdom 12-13
- The coming of the Lamb 14
- Seven plagues
- The fall of Babylon 17:1-19:4
- Christ victorious 19:5-20:15

Part 3: A vision of a new heaven and a new earth 21:1-22:5

- Conclusion 22:6-21

Revelation 18: "Fallen, Fallen is Babylon!"

Please pick up your Bible and read all of Revelation 18. After reading Revelation 18, answer the questions in the following activity.

ACTIVITY 3

1. *List the reasons why Babylon is portrayed negatively.*
2. *From verses 3-5, outline the accusations laid against other nations and the advice given.*
3. *From verses 9-11, state why other nations will weep for the fall of Babylon.*
4. *What is the main activity that Babylon and other nations use to engage with each other.*

As an Empire, Rome traded with many nations, cities and merchants. As you probably already know the relationship of imperial centres with its subjects, nations and colonies is not that of equals. The empire colonises its subjects for its own benefit. In the past three centuries, 85 per cent of the earth's surface was colonised by Britain, France, Portugal and Spain. They sold their cultures and languages to their colonisers and exported their raw material to their factories who then sold manufactured goods back, at higher rates, to the colonies. Although many countries successfully fought for liberation, in reality their economic structures had been permanently changed to remain dependent on the former colonies. In the post-independence era, former colonies therefore remain economically colonised. We often describe these relationships in terms of *developed and developing* nations or *north and south* or *first and third world* countries. Most former colonies have been rendered more dependent on their former colonisers through World Bank and IMF loans. Due to these loans,

most so-called *developing countries* have completely lost control over their economies. They live in dire poverty as they work to repay loans.

ACTIVITY 4

1. *Has your country undergone what they call “structural adjustment?”*
2. *Find out how much your country owes the World Bank or IMF.*

The Context of Babylon Today and the Struggle against HIV&AIDS

Today the sceptre of Babylon (international domination) has taken the form of what is called globalisation. Yet you should know that globalisation builds on the roots of modern colonialism. Globalisation is a new economic structure that dis-empowers governments as guardians of social welfare in their countries, since every social service becomes privatised and profit-oriented. Hospitals, schools, water, electricity, and communication gets bought by international companies who seek to make profit rather than to provide affordable social services to people. The marks of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation are growing poverty among the formerly colonised nations—poverty that serves as major pathway for the spread and entrenchment of HIV& AIDS in ‘developing’ countries. Read the following quotes:

Poverty is an important factor in the transmission of HIV. Perhaps more than anything else, it informs many of the undesirable choices made by poor people, including behaviour that increases the risk of HIV infection—alcohol abuse, multiple sexual partners and sex for money. Thus, in conditions of poverty, any response to HIV&AIDS that fails to appreciate why poor people adopt particular survival strategies will have less than the desired impact. Overall success in containing the HIV&AIDS will depend on the extent to which development strategy puts emphasis on the reduction of poverty and inequality (UNDP Bots 2000:4).

Sub-Saharan Africa is by far the worst affected region in the world. An estimated 25.3 million Africans were living with HIV at the end of 2000. By that time, a further 17 million had already died of AIDS—over three times the number of AIDS deaths in the rest of the world (UNAIDS 2000:1).

ACTIVITY 5

1. Find out from your national statistics how many people live below poverty datum line in your country.
2. State the unemployment rate in your country and how it affects the youth.
3. Describe some of the poverty eradication projects undertaken in your country.

HIV&AIDS entrenchment in Africa is largely a symptom of the economic poverty of the continent. ‘Third World’ poverty, as Christoph Lind tells us, in his book *Something is Wrong Somewhere: Globalization, Community and the Moral Economy of the Farm Crisis* is engineered by unfair international trade (1995:31-40). In Revelation 18 the unacceptability of imperial policies is presented through naming its evil and underlining its inevitable fall. In verse 2 the author says “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast.” Distaste is evident in these words. The seer tells us that heaven finds Babylon centres abominable. Heaven underlines that Babylon will and must fall.

ACTIVITY 6

Read the following descriptions and note down the impact of the structural adjustment programs recommended by the World and IMF on the economies of many African countries.

“The deteriorating economic conditions in most African countries, especially resulting from the implementation of the International Monetary fund (IMF) and the World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs, led to a brain drain” (Anonymous 1996:35).

“The international agencies recognise that undoubtedly a period of increased poverty occurs in some communities when Structural Adjustments Programs (SAPS) are introduced and that poverty resulting from SAPS is linked to the AIDS epidemic”

(Kirmani & Munyakho 1996:175).

Revelation chapter 18 underlines that trade thrives in Babylon imperial centres. If you have any doubt, watch the airports and seaports of imperial countries and cities. For centuries ships have carried all kinds of goods from the colonies to the empires. The colonisers' goods ranged from human goods to gold, diamonds to raw agricultural materials of all kinds, stolen mummies, art and even buried bodies were exhumed, carried away and displayed in museums. What Babylonian merchants could not ship away such as indigenous languages, cultures and lands, they destroyed. Finally, Babylon put in place the so called World Bank and IMF loan system that ensures that it harvests all economic labour and wages for its own ends. And by turning the economies of their subjects into master pieces of failure through exploitation, they succeed in sponsoring *brain drain*. In other words, there is a massive movement of people from the so-called developing countries to the developed countries. Today, as we speak, Babylon-centres have established globalisation—an international economic system that works through liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation to disable national governments in order to open doors for their merchants to own and maximise profits in former colonies.

Heaven has a Language for Babylon Trade

Yes, my dear learner, there is endless travel and trade between the imperial centres and their former/colonies. But while trade with the Babylon centres, always thrives because empires and colonies are established, the author of Revelation tells us that heaven has a description for this trade. According to the heavenly revelations of chapter 18:3, “All the nations have drunk wine of the wrath of Babylon’s fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with Babylon and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury”. Note, my dear learner, that heaven tells us that such a relationship amounts to getting yourself drugged. Revelation tells us that heaven describes this trade as a relationship of letting ourselves to get involved in Babylon’s acts of fornication. Moreover, heaven is very aware that many merchants, what we call multinational companies today, have made great profit. But at what price? The Asian Theological conference has given us description of globalisation, the latest killer sword of Babylon:

Money with a capital M was promoted as the storehouse of value, rather than a medium for exchange. Every relationship in which people were involved and stayed outside the purview of the markets, such as education, health care and religious practices were also brought into the reality of market. Market now has control over the social, economic, political and cultural relationships of the people. All other social forces, including the state, which regulated people's needs, have ceased to operate...therefore, people are turned into labour or prostitutes, nature as land or raw materials, or golf parks and culture as souvenirs...in tourist markets. Moreover, the organising philosophy of the market ecclesia...is social exclusion: Those who have no commoditable money or commoditable commodities (including skills) were excluded from the market and left as expendables (2000:218-219).

ACTIVITY 7

The above description of globalisation is provided by the Asian Conference of Theologians. From this description, what is ethically wrong with globalisation?

Heavenly revelations in chapter 18 underline that Babylon-centred trade is unacceptable. In verse 4, Revelations says, “*Come out of Babylon, my people so that you do not take part in Babylon’s sins*”. We are encouraged, as the Christian church, to resist Babylon-defined world trade systems that reduce billions to live in unacceptable poverty. In Revelation 18, heaven names Babylon trade for what it is—*sin*. For the Christian church and nations to participate in Babylon driven policies is to take part in Babylon’s sins. In the HIV&AIDS era, this has been clearly underlined to us, for research and documentation overwhelmingly attest that economic trade policies that groom poverty sponsor the infection and promote the death of millions by HIV&AIDS. Babylon driven trade policies sustain lack of quality care, for they hinder access to affordable ARVs. The Christian church thus needs to continue to prophesy against Babylon international trade policies that have reduced billions of God’s people to live in unacceptable poverty. Indeed, the Christian churches, need to recapture the good news of Christ as he laid them out at his very first sermon in Luke 4:16-22, when he said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because *he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour...*today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

If am sure you will agree with me that Babylon trade does not seek to set the captives free or to declare the year of the Lord. It does not seek to preach the good news to the poor, for such requires that we envision and work for a new heaven and a new earth—one whose ethics are gospel defined than Babylon driven. When gospel ethics inform all our relationships, all human beings and all life in the earth community will be respected as sacred divine creations of God the Creator, who created all of us intentionally good (Genesis1:31)—not rubbished by Babylon-driven trade policies to endless dehumanizing poverty. When the gospel-ethics begin to inform and organise our relationships, then we will begin to work and see a new heaven and a new earth for ourselves and our worlds. Indeed, as we have been taught to pray in the Lord's prayer, God's kingdom will have come and God's will be done on earth as in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Justice for All is Health for All!

I am sure you will agree with me that much of our relationships in the world are, unfortunately, based on inequalities—at family, work, church, and community, national and international levels. It is unfortunate—and deadly—that we have been taught to see our races (color), ethnicities (tribes), genders (male/female), age (old/young), nationalities, continents (north/south), cultures and languages through a dual and hierarchical lens that always renders the other as inferior and worth for suppression and exploitation. Inequality is the number one health risk that the oppressors have created and maintained for our world: it is the deadly virus wrecking our community and immunity.

In the HIV&AIDS era, it has become clear that we need to reconstitute all our relationships on the basis of equality and justice to, for and with all. We need to realise that every human being is made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). We need to realise that God blessed both men and women and gave both of them leadership and

access to the resources of the earth (Genesis 1:28-30). Hence no person of any colour, country, gender, age, ability, sexuality, ethnicity or identity should be denied leadership powers and relegated to poverty. We need to be fully aware that poverty is a major violation of God's intention for creation. Poverty is a constant violation of God's image that is embodied in every human face that we see. Indeed, we need to realise that, not just human being, but that all life forms on earth are sacred creations of God's hand (Genesis 1:1-31). HIV&AIDS has underlined that which we have always known; namely, *justice for all is health for all in the earth community*. HIV&AIDS has thus become a revelatory story, forcefully highlighting to us that relationships of inequality are unhealthy for all of us.

SUMMARY: Eyeing a New Heaven and a New Earth

This time we will summarise and differently. I want us to conclude this unit and module with the words of John in Revelations 21:1-6, which underlines that we need a total social revolution in all our relationships—a new heaven and a new earth. I cannot think of any verse that best summarizes the quest of our journey into the New Testament story than Revelations 21:1-6. I, therefore, want to invite you to take up your binoculars and join me and John to see this heavenly revelation. But when we are invited to see a new heaven and a new earth, *we are in fact invited to be responsible for building this new heaven and new earth—here and now. Today*. As James 2:14 has emphatically told us, our Christian faith and our gospel informed ethics are dead if they are not accompanied by a program of implementing our faith, practically. My dear learner, come closer to me. *Stand with me*. Please, put on your binoculars. Watch and pray with me. Let us watch this heavenly vision with John at Patmos, right here where we have been exiled and where we long for home—a new heaven and a new earth. I believe that what we shall see with John at Patmos best captures about what this module is about—namely, our search for new stories that counteract the HIV&AIDS horror story in our lives through weaving new and warm stories of hope, compassion, healing, joy, life and a justice-loving world. Okay, dear learner, this is it. Let us get a good view of this heavenly vision for our earth:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “See, the home of God is among mortals”. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. *Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new”*. Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end”.

And with this vision, let us remember the words of the Lord’s Prayer (but not just remember, let us labour for their realisation): May “*your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors” (Matthew 6:10-12).

SELF-ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY

Congratulations! You have just finished reading the New Testament in the light of HIV&AIDS. You have taken many exciting journeys to the story worlds of the New Testament, asking how these stories can assist us to weave new stories of compassion, hope, healing and justice to counteract the HIV&AIDS horror story in our worlds. Together, we journeyed into many powerful gospel stories. I believe you are now better equipped to become part of building a healing and compassionate church—an HIV& AIDS competent church. Before you sign off from this module, please respond to the questions below. Lastly, I advise that you should review the whole module and then take the test and exam below.

1. In a paragraph, write briefly about the date of authorship, purpose and themes of the book of Revelation.
2. What type of literature is Revelation and what are its characteristics?
3. Using chapter 18 and 21, discuss how the book of Revelation can assist us to fight the HIV&AIDS epidemic.



FURTHER READING

Anonymous. 1996. "I Have a Life, I Will Live," pp. 34-42. In L. D. Long and M. E. Ankrah. eds. *Women's Experience with HIV/AIDS: An International Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press.

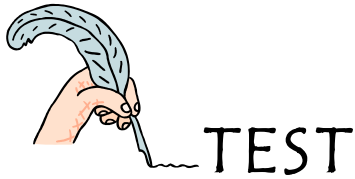
Boesak, Allan. 1984. *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse From a South African Perspective*. Philadelphia: Westminster.

Dibeela, M. P. 2003. "International Injustice," pp. 256-258. In *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC, (Available electronically from the web—**FREE**, go to: www.wcc-coe.org/english.html).

Dube, Musa W. 2000. "Praying the Lord's Prayer in the Global Economic Era (Matt. 6: 9-13)," pp. 611-630. In G. West and M. W. Dube. eds. *The Bible in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

_____. 2003. "Talitha Cum! Calling the Girl-Child and Women to Life in HIV/AIDS and Globalization Era," pp. 71-93. In Isabel Apawo Phiri. eds etl. *African Women HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.

Rowland, Christopher. 2004. "Revelation," pp. 559-570. In Daniel Patte. eds. etl. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.



Time: 1 hour test

Instructions: Attempt all questions

1. Describe four features that characterise an ancient letter.
2. Demonstrate why 1 Corinthians is an ancient letter.
3. Explain how the perspective of 1 Corinthians 7 can assist us in HIV prevention.
4. Discuss hopelessness in the HIV&AIDS context and use 1 Corinthians 15 to expound ways or recapturing hope for life.
5. Discuss the problems that led to the composition of 1 Timothy.
6. Explain how the author of 1 Timothy addressed the problems confronting the church of his time.
7. Explain why the approach of the author (1 Timothy) is not helpful in the fight against HIV&AIDS.
8. Discuss how 1 Timothy is problematic towards women in the HIV&AIDS era.
9. Compare and contrast 1 Timothy with the perspective of 1 Corinthians.
10. Give reasons why it is unlikely that Paul wrote 1 Timothy.



EXAMINATION PAPER

Time: 2 hours

Instructions: Attempt all questions

1. Describe the most challenging journey that you undertook in the process of reading this module. Give reasons for your answer.
2. Explain why HIV&AIDS is a horror story and why we need good news stories in our lives to counteract the epidemic.
3. Discuss a New Testament story that you found powerful and helpful for the struggle against the HIV&AIDS epidemic.
4. Identify four types of literature in the New Testament and describe one feature of each of them.
5. Compare the perspective of the gospel of Luke towards wealth and justice with the book of Acts. Explain their relevance to the HIV&AIDS struggle.
6. Explain why in the HIV&AIDS struggle ‘justice to all’ is vital for the health of all.
7. Compare the perspective of James towards excessive and exploitative wealth with that of Revelation.
8. Compare and contrast the perspective of 1 Timothy and that of Revelation towards oppression of Christians.
9. Using a passage from the New Testament describe ‘the Jesus way’ of caregiving and how it can assist us in giving quality care to PLWHA.
10. Explain how your church, and other faith communities, can become active midwives in birthing a new heaven and new earth in the era of HIV&AIDS.
11. Using this module, make a ten week preaching or Bible study plan for your church on “Reading the New Testament in the HIV&AIDS Context.”



SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES

AACC. 2003. "The Covenant Document on HIV/AIDS." Nairobi: AACC.

Ackermann, Denise. 2004. "Tamar's Cry: Re-reading an Ancient Text in the Midst of HIV/AIDS Pandemic," pp. 27-59. In M. W. Dube and M. R. A. Kanyoro. eds. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. New York, Orbis.

Approdev. 2001. *HIV/AIDS: Grasping the Reality of Its Gender Dimension*. Brussels: Aprodev Gender Office, Feb.

Barr, David L. 1995. *New Testament Story: An Introduction*. London: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Berger, Michele T. 2004. *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatised Women*. NJ: Princeton University Press.

Boniface-Malle, A. 2004. "Allow Me to Cry Out: Reading Matthew 15:21-28 in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania," pp. 169-185. In Musa W. Dube. eds. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. New York, Orbis.

Byamugisha, Gideon. 2000. *Breaking the Silence on HIV/AIDS in Africa: How Religious Institutions Talk About Sexual Matters in Their Communities*. Kampala: Tricolour Designers and Printers.

Chukwu, Cletus. 1995. *Applied Ethics and HIV/AIDS in Africa*. Eldoret: Zapf Chancery.

Dube, Musa W. 2005. *The HIV&AIDS Bible: Selected Essays*. Scranton University press.

_____. ed. 2003. *HIV/AIDS and the Curriculum: Methods of Integrating HIV/AIDS in Theological Programs*. Geneva: WCC. (Available electronically from the web—**FREE**, go to: www.wcc-coe.org/english.html then click on Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)

_____. ed. 2003. *AfricaPraying: A Handbook on HIV/AIDS Sensitive Guidelines and Liturgy*. Geneva: WCC. (Available electronically from the web—**FREE**, go to: www.wcc-coe.org/english.html then click on Ecumenical HIV/AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA)

_____. ed. 2001. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. SBL: Atlanta.

_____. 2001. "Preaching to the converted Unsettling the Christian Church." *Ministerial Formation* 93, pp. 38-50.

_____. 2000. *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*. St Louis: Chalice Press.

_____ and M. R. A. Kanyoro. eds. 2004. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. New York: Orbis.

_____ and T.S. Maluleke. eds. 2001. *Missionia* 29/2. August. (Special Issue on Theology in HIV/AIDS Contexts).

Dunn, James D. G. 1993. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson.

EATWOT-ATC. 2000. "Thou Shall Not Worship Other Gods: Towards a Decolonizing Theology," pp. 213-231. In *Voices From the Third World*. Vol. XXIII No. 2.

Fall, Yassine. ed. 1999. *Africa: Gender Globalization and Resistance*. New York: AAWord.

Garrett, Susan, R. 1992. "Revelation," pp. 377-382. In Newsom Carol and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Gupta, Geeta Rao. 2000. "Gender, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS: The What, the Why and The How," pp.1-8. Plenary Address XIIIth International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa, July 12.

Heath, J. P. 2005. "HIV- and AIDS-related Stigma: Living with the Experience," pp. 27-32. In UNAIDS. *A Report of a Theological Workshop Focusing on HIV and AIDS-related Stigma*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

Isaak, Paul. 2005. "The Compassionate God—John 11," pp. 135-137. In *God Breaks the Silence: Preaching in Times of AIDS*. Wuppertal: UEM.

Johnson, Elizabeth. E. 1992. "Ephesians," pp. 338-342. In Newsom Carol & Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Landman Christina. 2003. *HIV/AIDS and Spiritual Care*. Pretoria: UNISA.

Lind, Christopher. 1995. *Something is Wrong Somewhere: Globalization, Community and the Moral Economy of the Farm Crisis*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Long, Lynellyn D. and Maxine Ankrah. eds. 2004. *Women Experiences With HIV/AIDS: An Interventional Perspective*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Longchar, Wati. ed. 2005. *Health, Healing and Wholeness: Asian Theological Perspectives on HIV/AIDS*. Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA.

LWF. 2002. *Crises of Life in African Religion and Christianity*. Geneva: LWF.

_____. LWF, 12th Assembly. 2003. *For the Healing of World: Study Winnipeg*, Canada 21-31, July.

Maloney, Linda. M. 1994. "The Pastoral Epistles," pp. 361-380. In Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. eds. *Searching the Scriptures, Volume 2*. New York: Crossroads.

Maluleke, T. S. 2002. "Bible Study: The Graveyard Man, The Escaped Convict and the Girl-Child: A Mission of Awakening, An Awakening of Mission." In *International Review of Mission* 91:550-57.

Maluleke, T.S. and S. Nadar. eds. 2002. *Special Issue 114: Overcoming Violence Against Women and Children, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, Nov.

Meeks, Wayne. A. 1993. *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers.

Messer, Donald. 2004. *Breaking The Conspiracy of Silence: Christian Churches and the Global AIDS Crisis*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Mhone H. & A. Visser. eds. 2002. *Positive Voices, Positive Lives, Positive Women*. Gaborone: COCEPWA.

Nasimiyyu-Wasike, Anne. 2000. "The Plight of Women and the Girl-Child in African in the Age of HIV/AIDS." In *Conscience: News Journal of Prochoice Catholic Opinion* Vol. xxii/3.

Newsom, Carol L. and Sharon Ringe. eds. 1992. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster Press.

O'Day, G. 1992. "John," pp. 293-304. In Newsom Carol and Sharon Ringe. eds. *The Women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: WFK.

Okure, Teresa. 1992. "The Will to Arise: Reflections on Luke 8: 40-56," pp. 221-230. In Mercy A. Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro. eds. *The Will to Arise: Women Tradition and the African Church*. New York: Orbis Press.

_____. 1995. "Reading From This Place: Some Prospects and Problems," pp. 52-69. In Fernando Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert. Eds. *Reading From This Place: Volume 2*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Patte, Daniel. ed. 2004. *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon.

Pippin, Tina. 1994. "The Revelation to John," pp. 109-130. In E. Schussler Fiorenza. eds. *Searching the Scriptures Vol 2: A Feminist Commentary*. New York: Crossroads.

Plaatje, Gloria. 2001. "Towards a Post-apartheid Black Feminist Reading of the Bible: A Case of Luke 2:36-38," pp. 114-144. In Musa W. Dube. ed. *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*. Atlanta/Geneva: SBL/WCC Publications.

Phiri I. etl. 2003. *African Women, HIV/AIDS and Faith Communities*. Pietmaritzburg: Cluster.

Rensberger, D. K. 1993. "The Gospel According to John," pp. 2011-2013. In *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers.

Russell-Coons, Ron. 1990. "We have AIDS," pp. 35-55. In Letty Russell. ed. *The Church With AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis*. Louisville: WJKB.

Russell, Letty M. 2004. "Re-Imagining the Bible in a Pandemic of HIV/AIDS," pp. 201-210. In Musa W. Dube and Musimbi R. Kanyoro. eds. *Grant Me Justice: HIV/AIDS and Gender Readings of the Bible*. New York, Orbis.

_____. *The Church With AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis*. Louisville: WJKB, 1990.

Soards Marion, L. 1987. "1Timothy," pp. 156-157. In *The Apostle Paul: An Introduction to his Writings and Teachings*. New York: The Paulist Press.

_____. 1987. "1Corinthians," pp. 71-81. In *The Apostle Paul: An Introduction to his Writings and Teachings*. New York: The Paulist Press, 1987.

Stendahl, Krister. 1976. *Paul Among the Jews and Gentiles*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Thairu, K. 2003. *The African and The AIDS Holocaust: A Historical and Medical Perspective*. Nairobi: Phoenix Publishers.

Thienchai, Lawrence Bishop. 2005. "Religion, Faith and HIV/AIDS: Perspective From the Catholic Faith Tradition," pp. 34-42. In Longchar Wati. ed. *Health, Healing and Wholeness: Asian Theological Perspectives on HIV/AIDS*. Jorhat: ETE-WCC/CCA.

United Evangelical Mission. (2005). *God Breaks the Silence: In Preaching in Times of AIDS*. Wuppertal: UEM.

United Nations in Botswana. (2004). *Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa*, Gaborone, June. (Available from the Internet: **FREE**).

UNAIDS. 2004. *AIDS Epidemic Update December*. Geneva: WHO. (Available from the internet: www.UNAIDS.org).

UNAIDS. 2001. *AIDS, Poverty Reduction and Debt Relief*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

_____. 2002. *A Conceptual Framework and Basis for Action: HIV/AIDS Stigma and Discrimination*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

_____. 2000. *Men and AIDS—Gendered Approach*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

_____. 1999. *Summary Booklet of Best Practices*. Geneva: UNAIDS.

UNAIDS and UNDP. 1998. *HIV/AIDS and Human Development South Africa*. UNDP.

UNDP Botswana. 2000. *Botswana Human Development Report 2000: Towards an AIDS-Free Generation*. Gaborone: UNDP.

WCC. 1997. *Facing AIDS: The Challenges, The Churches' Response*. Geneva: WCC.

_____. 2001. *HIV&AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa*. Geneva: WCC.

_____. 2001. *Plan of Action: The Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS in Africa*. Geneva: WCC.

WHO. 2002. *Community Home-Based Care in Resource-Limited Settings: A Framework for Action*. Geneva: WHO.

Wire, Antoinette. 1994. "1Corinthians," pp. 153-195. In Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza. Ed. *Searching the Scriptures Volume 2*. New York: Crossroads.

West, G. and Musa W. Dube. eds. 2000. *The Bible in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

USEFUL INTERNET RESOURCES

- UNAIDS (www.UNAIDS.org) is a joint United Nations Program on HIV&AIDS, offering worldwide information on the epidemic.
- AIDS Org (www.aids.org) provides updated information, especially treatment news.
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (www.gatesfoundation.org)
- AIDS Map (www.aidsmap.com) offers worldwide information and articles.
- www.lutheranworld.org –Lutheran World Federation
- United Methodist HIV/AIDS Ministries Network (www.gbgm.umc.org/health/aids)